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FAMILY.

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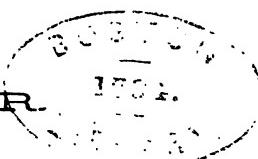
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THE BURGOMASTER'S FAMILY.

THE
BURGOMASTER'S FAMILY:
OR,

WEAL AND WOE IN A LITTLE WORLD.

BY
CHRISTINE MULLER.



TRANSLATED FROM THE DUTCH
BY
SIR JOHN SHAW LEFEVRE, K.C.B., F.R.S.

— · · —

NEW YORK:
SCRIBNER, ARMSTRONG & CO.
1873.

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" L'homme est un apprenti, la douleur est son maître,
Et nul ne se connaît tant qu'il n'a pas souffert.
C'est une dure loi, mais une loi suprême,
Vielle comme le monde et la fatalité
Qu'ils nous font du malheur recevoir le baptême,
Et qu'à ce triste prie, tout doit être acheté,
Les moissons pour murir ont besoin de rosée
Pour vivre et pour sentir ; l'homme à besoin de pleurs
La joie a pour symbole une plante brisée,
Humide encore de pluie et couverte de fleurs."

—ALFRED DE MUSSET.

ORPHANS' PRESS, CHURCH CHARITY FOUNDATION,
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INTRODUCTION.

THE authoress of the original tale modestly published it three years ago, before her marriage, under a *nom de plume*, "Christine Muller"—I have received her permission to state her actual name, E. C. W. van Walrée, her maiden name having been Gobie.

She is the wife of M. van Walrée, a gentleman engaged in an extensive manufacturing concern at Brummen, a small town situate between Zutphen and Arnhem in Gelderland.

Madame van Walrée was born at Hertogenbosch (Bois le Duc), in Brabant, where her father, a physician in the medical department of the army of the Netherlands was stationed.

Until she was twelve years old, her home was necessarily in various towns in the Netherlands, according to the duties and requirements of her father's profession. On coming to Amsterdam her father retired from the service, and for twelve years practised as a physician in that city with much success and reputation.

At the end of that time a severe illness obliged him to leave his practice and to settle in the country, at Brummen, where the authoress met and married M. van Walrée.

She had five brothers, of whom three died in infancy, the other two entered the

Royal Navy of the Netherlands, and of these unfortunately one only survives.

She was not educated at a boarding-school, but resided with her parents, attending a day-school at Amsterdam.

After she was grown up, she entered much into society, and being gifted with great powers of observation, she had opportunities of becoming thoroughly conversant with the habits and feelings of the class of society to which she belongs, and with the details incidental to town life in Holland.

The fidelity and accuracy with which, owing to the circumstances of her life and position, she has been able to describe the characters and events of her narrative, correspond with the like qualities which we find in the paintings of the Dutch school, and give additional value to her tale. The tale itself, her first and only literary production, has been very favorably received in the Netherlands, and has reached a second edition. It has been much eulogized in the principal Dutch literary periodicals, especially in the *Gids*, the *Spectator*, and the *Java Messenger*, and they warmly welcome this lady authoress. They praise her flowing narrative, the simplicity, clearness, and grace of her style, which unfortunately cannot be transferred into another language. They

notice the reality and nationality of her heroes and heroines, who, it is said, seem like old acquaintances, and the faithful delineation of Dutch character and Dutch family life, which can only be clearly discerned and duly appreciated by Dutch critics. They commend the liveliness of her descriptions, the variety of the incidents she has invented, the ingenuity with which the several plots and episodes in the story have been combined and developed, the judicious mixture of light and shade in the several characters, the knowledge she displays of the human heart, and the good moral tone and the unobtrusive

religious feeling pervading the whole of the work, which appropriately concludes with the sentiment that "God makes His creatures happy, but in His own way and not in theirs."

On these special subjects of commendation, however, the English public can as well form a correct judgment as the fellow-countrymen of the authoress; and in the hope of that judgment being favorable, the translator respectfully offers these remarks.

J. S. L.

Dec. 12, 1872.

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THE BURGOMASTER'S FAMILY.

CHAPTER I.

THE JOURNEY HOME.

It was a fine day in June, and the eleven o'clock train from Amsterdam, heavily laden with passengers and luggage, only waited for the last whistle to start from the station.

The peculiar bustle of the moment of departure prevailed on the platform. Trucks with trunks and packages were wheeled in all haste out of the luggage office to the goods vans; relations and friends who were to remain behind waved their adieux to the travellers, and here and there a last shake of the hand was exchanged.

"Good-bye, Miss Emmy! God bless you! Think now and then of old Henry!"

It was a little meagre old man who uttered these words, as he stood, with his cap in his hand, at the door of a first-class carriage. A fair-haired young lady leant out of the window with a friendly smile, and with tears in her eyes. She did not answer his adieux, but reached out her hand once more to the old man, and, indeed, had she spoken, he could hardly have heard her, for the whistle screamed and the train was off.

The young lady sat in a corner of the carriage and gazed out of the window, whilst one by one the objects familiar to her vanished out of her sight. The tears rolled down her cheeks, but yet it was rather a melancholy sensation incidental to leave-taking than any more painful feeling which caused them to flow; for Emmy Welters was still at that happy age when every change has its charms, when the

future looks rose-colored in the horizon, and the feeling of youth and cheerfulness soon overcame any momentary regret.

Emmy Welters was eighteen years of age. Where was she going? She was going to her native place and parental home. To both, owing to a long absence, she had become almost a stranger.

For in her twelfth year she had had the misfortune to lose her mother, and her unmarried aunt at Amsterdam had taken possession of her with the ready consent of her father, who felt himself little fitted to superintend the completion of her education.

The aunt who took charge of her was one of those women to be found in almost every family; a woman who in ordinary times is too little considered, but who, as soon as sorrow, sickness, or death enters the house, appears on the threshold as a guardian angel. In such a case it is to her always that the letter written with a trembling hand is addressed. Be it Aunt Anna, Sister Wim, or Cousin Kate, she is always an old maid, and for this reason people feel justified in making use of her. It seems to them quite natural that she should leave her comfortable home to administer the household and keep the seven troublesome children in order, whilst the mistress of the house is up-stairs with the newly-born, No. 8. (She is unmarried, and therefore cannot be wanted at home.) It does not appear unreasonable that in another family where the husband lies ill, she should watch day and night by his bedside (she has nothing better to do). It is quite *en règle* that she should come and

take care of the husband whose wife has been carried to the churchyard. Yes, indeed, it is even thought nothing out of the way if, during the three warm summer months, she acts as *bonne* to the children, while husband and wife are making a tour among the mountains in Switzerland (after all, it is more sociable for her than being at home alone with her cat and canary bird). At least so people think, and so they justify themselves; and thus the unmarried women are not unfrequently weighted with all the burdens of all the families of their relations and friends, and their task is somewhat heavier than that of the married woman, who has only the cares of a single family to call her own. Of all these privileged family drudges Emmy's aunt was certainly one of the most privileged.

She was the eldest of eight brothers and sisters, who were all married except herself; and as she had sufficient fortune to make her independent, she might have enjoyed much of life, had not all these families considered her indispensable in deaths, in baptisms, and in sickness, so that gradually her own home was only recognized as a place where she lodged for a few weeks, whenever, by a happy chance, none of her brothers and sisters required her help.

Amidst all the many burdens borne for the sake of others, Aunt Emmy had grown old, and probably the remainder of her life would have been spent in the same manner, had not an unexpected event provided her with a few years of rest.

Her youngest sister, who had married the Burgomaster of Dilburg, Mr. Welters, died after a long illness, during which she had been nursed by Aunt Emmy with unexampled care, leaving one son of eighteen, Otto, and a daughter of twelve, Emmy. Amongst the crowd of nephews and nieces in whose possession she rejoiced, little Emmy was Aunt Emmy's pet child. It

seemed to the old aunt that she had attained the summit of happiness when she was able to take Emmy to live with her; when, with all the warmth of her loving heart, she could dedicate her life to the care and education of her favorite niece; and when at last she had a duty which bound her to her own home, and she would no longer be the common property of her relatives.

And Emmy loved her good old aunt as a mother; and indeed, during the last two years, when her aunt was weak and ill, Emmy had nursed her with the hearty affection of a daughter, and as a daughter, had wept at her death-bed, when, a few weeks ago, Aunt Emmy had gone to her rest.

But in those six years great changes had taken place in her father's house. Emmy had been two years with her aunt when the news came that her father was about to marry widow De Graaff.

The widow had three children, two daughters and a son. Elizabeth de Graaff, the youngest, in former times, had been a playfellow of Emmy's, and was only a year or two younger than herself; the son had been a schoolfellow of Emmy's brother, Otto, with whom he had formerly lived in obstinate enmity, as Emmy still clearly remembered. Of the eldest daughter, who was then quite grown-up, she had only a faint recollection.

Thus they were now all brothers and sisters, at least in name—Mina, William, and Elizabeth de Graaff, and Otto Welters and his sister Emmy. Of the new members of the family, Emmy had since seen nothing. Her father came twice a year to Amsterdam on business, and at the same time paid a visit to his sister-in-law and his little daughter; and her brother Otto, who had studied at Leyden with a view to becoming an advocate, gave up a few days of each vacation as an offering to his little sister, for the quiet home of the old

aunt had very little further attraction for him.

Every year, on New Year's Day, Emmy sent her stepmother her good wishes, accompanied by a piece of needlework as a present; and every year her letter was courteously answered by Mrs. Welters, with the addition of the greetings of Mina and William, and a short note from the little Elizabeth in school-girl language.

Four years previous to Emmy's actual return, a plan had been formed for Emmy to pay a visit to her father; but, from various causes, nothing came of this plan for the first two years, and in the last two the illness and helplessness of her aunt made Emmy's going from home impossible. She called it going from home, for in Emmy's thoughts the house of her aunt was the home to which she was attached by the strong bonds of gratitude and love. Lat-terly, when her aunt was bedridden, she had frequently, in the long, silent, solitary evenings, thought, in spite of herself, with longing interest of her parental home. She endeavored to picture to herself home-life in the midst of her brothers and sisters—a life which she embellished in her mind with all the glow of youth and imagination, and where the shadow-side found no place. She was not the less grieved, however, when her aunt died; but when her first tears were dried, she turned her thoughts hopefully to her real home, her father's house, where was her natural position. Emmy thought over all these things whilst she was sitting in the corner of the railway carriage. It was an old servant of her aunt who had brought her to the train, and had uttered the heartfelt adieu which we have heard him speak.

"Is mademoiselle also going to Arnheim?"

With these words, Emmy was disturbed in her meditations by a stout lady who sat opposite her, and who, for fear of not having time enough at Arnheim to get all her

things together, kept tightly grasped in her hands her umbrella, parasol, and travelling-bag.

"Are you quite certain that this is the train to Arnheim?" she suddenly added, with an expression of much anxiety in her countenance. Emmy tranquillized her, and at the same time met the amused glance of a young man who was looking at her with rude persistence. The Englishman, also, in the other corner, with red whiskers and the inevitable Murray in his hand, let his book fall, and stuck his eyeglass in the corner of his left eye, that he might look at her at his ease when she should turn towards him.

And true enough Emmy Welters was well worth looking at, as she sat there in her simple but tasteful dress. A beauty in the strict sense of the word she was not. She had clear blue eyes and pretty fair hair, which, cropped short, waved in natural curls all over her head, on which her little round black hat sat most becomingly.

The dark mourning dress which she wore, and which set off still more the delicate whiteness of her complexion, gave her so attractive an appearance that one forgot to remark that her mouth was large, and that her nose, which was intended to be Grecian, had grown in a different direction. But the dimple in her cheek, and the bloom of youth which was spread over her countenance, compensated for the irregularity of her features. Yes, if a good exterior is a letter of recommendation to the world, Emmy Welters entered it well recommended. But the world she was about to enter was not a great one—the world of the provincial town of Dilburg, of which her father was burgomaster; a little town—like most little towns—where all human passions whirl round in a small circle; where the young doctor is the deadly enemy of the old doctor; where the orthodox preacher does not think his more modern fellow-clergyman worthy of a bow; a little town

where an engagement, a marriage, or a death is an interesting event which keeps all minds for whole days in a state of conjecture ; where any accident is treated as an animated subject of conversation ; a little town where much good is done to the poor and suffering, but where a great deal of evil is spoken, and where every inhabitant is inspired with the conviction that one might look through the world in vain for a more perfect town than the said little town of Dilburg.

At Arnheim, Emmy helped the stout lady and her possessions out of the train, not sorry to be quit of one who seemed to carry with her the conviction that she should be somehow or other lost between Amsterdam and Arnheim ; that the train, instead of pursuing its way straight to Arnheim, as was its duty, would allow itself to make a little excursion to Rotterdam or elsewhere ; or that the station to which she was bound would, in an unguarded moment, escape her observation. At each stoppage she put her head out to ask this or that person within reach of her voice whether this was Arnheim, or whether the train was really going to Arnheim, at which town she at last arrived safely, not a little fatigued and heated by the anxiety she had endured.

Here, too, both the gentlemen left the carriage, so that Emmy was alone and could indulge in her own thoughts undisturbed during the rest of her journey to Dilburg. The nearer she came, the more cheerfully her heart beat. In vain, however, she looked out for any place which she had known in the days of her childhood. Where the canal-boat and diligence had held their undisturbed sway, the railway train, with its seven-leagued boots, now rushed through the country. Here it had cut an estate in two ; here it had felled half a wood ; here it had swallowed up an old castle ; here it had separated a meadow or corn-field from the farm—sacrifices all

made more or less willingly to swift locomotion. All these changes quite broke off the chain of Emmy's recollection, so that the town of her destination was in sight when she fancied it was still distant by half an hour. The train had hardly stopped when she jumped lightly out of the carriage and gave a searching look round.

On the platform there were very few persons, and hardly a single passenger got out of the train except herself, so that Otto Welters had very little difficulty in finding his sister.

And Emmy had immediately caught sight of him, for Otto was one of those men whom you could recognize out of a thousand. He was more than ordinarily tall, and the sparseness of his figure made his height more striking. He had, moreover, a long thin neck, on which rested a small, almost too small, head. He had light brown curly hair and the same blue eyes as his sister Emmy, but his were shaded by spectacles, which still further increased the peculiarity of his exterior ; and yet that exterior was undoubtedly agreeable. One felt attracted to him by a certain goodness and kindness expressed in his countenance. His fine-cut mouth was enclosed in a dark beard, which covered all the lower part of his face, and gave him a manliness which he otherwise would have wanted, owing to the delicacy of his features and the smallness of his head.

"Welcome, dear Emmy," he said, heartily, as he stooped to kiss her on both cheeks.

"It is very good of you, Otto, to come and fetch me. I was afraid you would be unable to find time ; for, if I may believe the newspapers, a new shining star has arisen in the advocate firmament of Dilburg."

"You're as saucy as ever," said Otto, laughing. "Well, really, Emmy, how tall you have grown !"

"I forbid such remarks ; they are insulting to my eighteen years of age," Emmy answered, handing him the tickets for her trunks.

Whilst Otto went to the luggage office, Emmy sat down on a bench outside the waiting-room with a heart overflowing with happiness. All her life she had so loved that brother. Six years older than herself, Otto had a protective tenderness for his little sister—"the child," as he called her, whom his mother had confided to him on her death-bed. If only all her belongings felt a part of the pleasure at her coming which Otto's glistening eyes expressed ! thought Emmy—

"Now, child, your luggage is all right," said Otto, cutting short her meditations, "and I have already secured a cab."

"Is it really necessary to go in a cab?"

"Necessary ; why, what do you mean?"

"Why, if it is not too much against Dilburg etiquette, I had rather, for my own pleasure, walk home with you, and talk to you about a hundred things which I have in my mind."

"'s Menschen Wille ist sein Himmelreich," answered Otto ; and putting Emmy's hand under his arm, they set off on their walk without furthur delay.

"And what have you in your mind to say, my little Emmy?"

Emmy was silent for a moment at the question ; then she said, with some hesitation, "I am so happy to come home, Otto ; but are they happy at home that I am coming ?"

"Are you always going to ask me such awkward questions, child? What can I say? I know three individuals who have said in so many words that they are glad—papa, Elizabeth, and I. The others of the family are not of a demonstrative nature."

"What sort of person is mamma, Otto?"

"What sort of man is the Emperor of China? Do you think that I can paint a portrait of her on the spot as large as life.

No, Emmy," he continued, more gravely, "do not ask me for a description of our new family ; it is much better that you should see them with your own eyes. Commence with the intention of loving them and doing your duty by them, and time will show you further."

"Perhaps you are right, Otto. But tell me one thing—do you love our new mother?"

Otto paused a moment before he answered ; then he said, in a decisive tone, "No, Emmy ; love her I do not. Yet there has never been a disagreeable word exchanged between us. I determined from the very beginning that I would do all in my power not to disturb the peace of the family ; and as I do not, as you know, live at home, it has not been difficult. I need not be more at my father's house than I like, but it is a pleasure to me to be in the family circle ; and often when I come there of an evening, and find the family sitting sociably round the tea-table, then I think of the loneliness of the parlor after our dear mother's death, and I feel grateful to my stepmother, who revived our domestic life, and brought home my father from a life at the club."

"And William de Graaff?—as a boy you could not endure him."

"I still do not like him, and he likes me as little ; but we bear with each other since we have become brothers, without troubling ourselves much about each other. Now ask me about Mary van Stein, Emmy."

"Is it true, Otto?" said Emmy, turning towards him and looking at him. "I am so glad for your sake. Is it really all settled?"

"Who has been telling tales out of school?" said Otto, laughing. "It is not yet all settled, so far as relates to the definite consent of Uncle Van Stein, who will not at present hear of an engagement. But Mary and I are quite at one on the

subject, and I pass most evenings with her. You must learn to know our cousin, Emmy, and I am sure you will love her. She is so dear and good, and her patience with that old hypochondriac is truly wonderful, for Uncle Van Stein still goes about as formerly, with his health under his arm ; little or no change has taken place there."

"So, then, I have one more sister to become acquainted with. Well, one more or less is all the same to me," said Emmy gayly ; "but I wish you happiness with all my heart, dear Otto !"

Brother and sister now walked on in silence for a little time. Although they went slowly towards the town, Emmy had hardly time enough to observe, right and left, all the well-known objects which came into the foreground of her memory. Here a house, there a tree, a bridge, a bank—she greeted all with gladness, and no more regular conversation took place.

All the persons they met saluted the advocate Welters, or were saluted by him, as is the habit in a small town ; but with some special exceptions, in which Otto helped her memory with long forgotten names, they were all strangers to Emmy. When they reached the market-place in the middle of the town, on their way to the street where her father's house was situated, they met a young man in a light gray summer dress, who was coming out of the street somewhat hurriedly, and almost ran against them at the corner. He quickly stepped aside, but Otto and Emmy had already made way for him in the same direction, so that they again stood before each other. Otto burst out laughing, and said—

" Hallo ! Bruno ! not so fast ; don't run over old friends."

The young man cast a rapid glance at Emmy, and a deep blush diffused itself over his face. He hastily took off his straw hat, and muttered a few indistinct words.

His evident confusion was shared by Emmy, and she blushed as she held out her hand to him, and said—

" I thought you were in the East Indies, Bruno."

Bruno slowly recovered his self-possession, but he did not look at Emmy when he said—

" I have already been back some weeks. My ship came home unexpectedly before my time was out." He now stood aside to let Otto and Emmy pass, and turning back he walked on with them by Emmy's side without either of them saying a word.

In fact the rest of the walk was only along the fronts of some twenty houses.

" Remember me to your father and mother, Bruno, until I can pay them a visit," said Emmy at last, when Bruno had again raised his hat to take leave of them, and Otto, going up the flight of steps to a large house, exclaimed in a hearty manner, " Welcome home, dear little sister ! "

The residence of Burgomaster Welters was an old-fashioned house, built of gray stone. It had only two stories. Of these the upper had the small casement windows with which our ancestors were content, whilst the lower story was altered according to the great window-glass mania with which just at that time Dilburg was possessed. These great panes were, however, so little in accordance with the old-fashioned whole that it made one think of a man in new-fashioned clothes who was faithful to his periwig and pigtail of the last century. Even before Otto rang, the door opened, and Emmy had barely entered the marble passage when a young girl darted out from behind the front door, threw her arms round Emmy's neck and kissed her, calling out, in a merry voice, " Here's a kiss of welcome from Elizabeth."

Emmy was somewhat confounded by this unexpected meeting, but it quite took away the feeling of fear and trepidation

with which she had stood on the well-known threshold.

She looked with a smile at the fresh happy face of Elizabeth, who now went before her along the passage, jumping rather than running, clearly not impressed by the dignity of her age of sixteen.

"Why, Otto, where have you been dawdling? I have been listening for the carriage this half-hour, and here you come at last, taking it all so quietly. But Otto is a brother with whom one loses one's patience, Emmy."

Otto laughed in answer to Elizabeth's banter, whilst he opened a door at the end of the passage, took Emmy's hand under his arm, and entered with her.

It was a large room with glass doors opening into a garden. Near one of these open doors stood a sofa, with a small table placed before it, at which Mrs. Welters and her eldest daughter were sitting.

Mrs. Welters was a large stout woman, who, if ever she had been pretty, retained little trace of it. A large nose, and small piercing eyes; about the mouth an expression of determination, and on her whole appearance a stamp of self-satisfaction, which made the first impression of her not agreeable.

She came forward two steps, whilst Otto, going up to her with Emmy, said, not without some emotion, "Here is our Emmy, mamma."

Emmy had frequently imagined this meeting. In her thoughts she had thrown her arms round her stepmother's neck, and, with a hearty kiss, had asked her for a mother's love, of which she felt so greatly the want.

But, as is usually the case, the actual event was in no respect like the conception of it.

Herself of moderate height, Emmy looked up at the tall lady who impressed a cold kiss on her forehead, and the words which she had wished to say died on her

lips, whilst, much as she tried, she could not keep back her tears.

"This is your sister Mina, Emmy," said Mrs. Welters, turning to her eldest daughter, who was standing by the table with her work in her hand, and who now received in silence Emmy's kiss.

Elizabeth helped Emmy to take off her hat and cloak, and Mrs. Welters made room for her on the sofa, whilst the rest sat down round the table.

In first meetings of this kind, even when between old and loved friends who meet with all possible joy, there is still something forced. The heart is full; each has a thousand things to ask and to say, and yet on both sides a certain timidity is felt which makes the conversation turn at first on questions relating to the journey and the weather. In Emmy's peculiar position with respect to her new family this impression was still stronger. Mrs. Welters alone was entirely at her ease, and kept the conversation going with the greatest calmness. She inquired of Emmy in the politest manner as to her health and her journey; spoke of the death of the old aunt, the warm weather, and the charming summer. But Emmy gave short and commonplace answers.

Her heart was so full. She saw, as in a dream, the same room, in which the sofa stood in the same place, and where her own mother was lying weak and ill. She remembered a fine day in June like this, when the sun shone as gayly on the flowers as now; when, just as now, the summer air came in through the open doors, with the same scent of mignonette which now filled the room; when Otto and she knelt by the sofa, and the last words of their dying mother were addressed to them.

These recollections overwhelmed her so that she could hardly listen to her stepmother, and could not half understand what was said to her; but all at once she heard Mrs. Welters utter these words:

"There is your father, Emmy," and when she looked up, and saw him actually coming into the room, she started up out of her dream, ran to meet her father, threw her arms round his neck, and whispered, "Papa, dear papa!" while she burst into tears.

CHAPTER II.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS.

A few hours later the family were at dinner. The ice of first acquaintance was broken. Emmy sat between her brother Otto and William de Graaff, who was introduced to her by her father, before dinner, with the words: "Here is still another brother, Emmy."

Emmy looked up surprised as she greeted William de Graaff, for, in the confusion of making so many new acquaintances, she had entirely forgotten the son of her stepmother, who was not present in the family circle when she arrived. On her first look at him, however, she immediately turned her eyes away; and certainly William de Graaff was not attractive at first sight. Tall and stout in figure like his mother, he had sharp features and thin lips, which he kept fast closed when he was not actually speaking. His light reddish hair was straight, and his pale gray eyes had something dreamy in their expression. Now and then he half closed them, and there seemed a strange, almost green light in them, changing the whole expression of his countenance, and giving it a look of slyness which had a repulsive effect on those who saw him.

William de Graaff was five-and-twenty. His father, who had been Director of the Post Office at Dilburg, had brought him up to the same employment; and the appointment which his father had formerly held having become vacant about a year before, fell to his lot. Like Otto Welters, he did not live at home; but they were

both much there, and regularly appeared at the family dinner-table.

Compared with Otto, William had few friends; and although in Dilburg no one could say anything against him, yet he was not liked; no one could exactly say why, but he was never in request nor sought after; and yet he was polite and obliging to every one, and did not put a straw in anybody's way.

Was it because he was ugly? No, that could not be the reason, for it was just the same at school, where good looks are not the touchstone of popularity. There indeed opinions were more openly expressed, for if any of the boys had done anything wrong secretly, the master always knew it on the following day in a mysterious manner, and the whole school declared that William de Graaff was the informer, although no proof against him ever came to light. Thus, when the time came for him to leave school, he was without any friends, and since his return to Dilburg he had made no new ones.

He was silent and reserved in manner. Most of his evening, after the post-office was shut up, he spent at home; but he generally had a book before him, and seldom took part in the conversation. Such was the person who was introduced to Emmy as still another brother.

He was extremely polite to Emmy, and she soon felt very much at her ease, and took a lively part in the general conversation, the subject of which was chiefly the events and recollections of earlier days.

I feel somewhat to blame, in having passed over the master of the house in my description of the members of the family; but my excuse must be a wish to portray him sitting at his dinner-table in the happiest hour of his whole day, and I shall not have done him injustice if I present him to you at this advantageous moment.

As to his exterior, I can say but little,

except that he was fat—fearfully fat. His body was fat, his broad cheeks were fat, and fat were his small white hands, which he folded complacently over his fat stomach.

It is assumed that all men have a definite character, and a narrator is required to reflect that character in all its peculiarities; but I must honestly confess that I am somewhat at a loss as to the character of Burgomaster Welters.

Properly speaking, the man's qualities were entirely of a negative kind. He had not a bad heart; he was not stupid; he had not a bad temper. He was by no means a bad husband or father, still less a careless or incapable Burgomaster of Dilburg, which town had entrusted its interests to him for more than five-and-twenty years, and had felt perfectly contented with his administration; but that the reverse of each of the above qualities was applicable to him in a positive sense I cannot take upon myself to state.

His rule of life was, to let "God's water flow over God's field"—to take the world as he found it—and, if the truth must be told, "to howl with the wolves for the sake of peace and quietness." Since he had married his present wife, or, to speak more correctly, since she had married him, he had given up into her hands the whole domestic administration, and it probably went on no worse for that. But besides the negative qualities of Burgomaster Welters, above mentioned, I have reserved for the last one that was positive, because it was the key to his whole character.

He had one idol which he worshipped with all the strength of his heart and soul, and on whose altar he would, in case of necessity, have sacrificed everything belonging to him. That idol was his belly. What a good dinner was to Burgomaster Welters no words can tell; it was the realization of all his dreams and wishes.

The content of soul and the feeling of

philanthropy which his eyes expressed after such a dinner must have been seen in order to be intelligibly described. How his heart overflowed with gratitude to those who provided him with the good things, he alone could know.

Yes, the evil world declared (but what will not men say to each other in a little town like Dilburg?) that the first idea he had of marrying widow De Graaff was suggested to him by a certain kind of pie, of which she obstinately kept the secret to herself, and of which, by his marriage, he became naturally the owner.

However this may be, so much is certain, that, owing to the above-mentioned idol, the Burgomaster's train of thought took a peculiar turn. The idea of the birth of a child came before his mind in the form of a christening dinner—a marriage in the form of a *djeuner*.

If Germany were mentioned, he thought of Bavarian beer. France reminded him of Veuve Cliquot, and Strasbourg of pâté de foie gras. If any one spoke of the glorious summer, he thought of early vegetables and fruit; in a word, life presented to Burgomaster Welters an ever fresh and changing picture, which any one with a smaller stomach and a larger heart could hardly have imagined.

With his wife, Mr. Welters lived in the most beautiful harmony. She decided; he confirmed, or at least did so in appearance, for Mrs. Welters was clever enough carefully to keep up that appearance, even when the reality was not always present. "Welters and I think this or that right," was a form of speech which she had made her own, although this was often the first word which her husband heard about the matter in question. But as he was quite satisfied we are not called upon to make any remark upon it.

It could not be denied that Mrs. Welters had a good, clear understanding. A

strength of will, such as is not often found in a woman, made every one in the family subject to her, and thus enabled her to accomplish her will without opposition. What she had once undertaken she carried out irrevocably.

On a certain day she formed the intention of bettering her position of widowhood by marrying the well-to-do Burgomaster Welters, and before six months had passed, she and her children had entered his dwelling. The children, who felt for her more respect than love, were never on that confidential footing with her which one so wishes to see between mother and child, and which generally exercises such a salutary influence on the formation of character.

The one who was least in awe of her strict mother was the young Elizabeth, born long after the others, and indeed after her parents had already determined to put away the cradle into the loft. She was the acknowledged favorite of her mother. In her youthful playfulness she was often allowed to do things which, had they been done by Mina or William in their childhood, would have brought down upon them severe punishment or sharp reproof.

But from a child Elizabeth was irresistibly lively and good-humored. She looked at the world with a merry, arch face ; she contemplated life on its most roseate side ; and was so contented with everything and everybody, that one could not be angry with her, but one involuntarily joined in her laugh instead of giving her the scolding intended for her. A few weeks before Emmy's return home she had left school, not much to the satisfaction of her sister Mina, who had her own reasons for wishing Elizabeth to be considered still a child.

For Mina de Graaff was so far beyond twenty, and so close upon thirty, that a very small step was necessary in order that

she might enter the age of three crosses. She was besides plain rather than pretty, and in these two things lay the whole history of her woes. To be old and ugly is for a "young lady" undoubtedly disagreeable—very disagreeable in itself, but to be old and ugly, and to wish to appear young and pretty, to attract attention, to make conquests—this is a misfortune for which, as for many another, one has to thank one's own folly ; but it is still a misfortune, for all that.

Mina had also a life's dream which hitherto had not been realized. She was not exorbitant in her wishes ; it was simply that she desired a companion in her journey through this world of sorrow ; and, although it seems easy to some to accomplish this, Mina had not yet had the satisfaction of seeing her efforts crowned with success.

Her endeavors had taken all possible forms in the ten years which she had already sacrificed in the fruitless chase. The older she became, the more she tried to attain her end by gaudy, fashionable dress ; but the men had been, and continued to be, insensible to all the bonnets and hats, the endless jackets and flounces, which she employed towards the furthering of the good cause. She had almost entangled in her nets a lieutenant, a captain, a landed proprietor, and even a professor ; but, in one way or another, they had all been able to escape before the knot was tied, and as yet no one had spoken the important word, and Mina was still Mina de Graaff.

Her mind was embittered by all her disappointments, and her temper had suffered much, but she had not yet lost heart. As long as there is life there is hope, she reasoned, and as her eyes became duller, her complexion sallower, her features sharper, her dress was proportionally younger and gayer in order to make up for short-comings. But with all her follies, Mina was wise enough to understand that a single lady has more chance of marrying in the first

than in the second twenty-eight years of life ; and that her chance was as good as lost whenever the pretty young Elizabeth should take *her* place by the side of herself in the ranks of young ladies.

Imagine, then, Mina's feelings when, under these circumstances, the death of the old aunt brought Emmy also into the family circle, and Mina saw her enter the room in all the bloom of youth and beauty. It was a feeling of despair and jealousy which at that moment mastered her, and made Emmy find in her an enemy instead of a sister and friend.

But wholly ignorant of the sensation she had awakened, Emmy sat at the dinner-table with her young heart full of happiness and content. From time to time she looked round, first at one and then at another ; they talked and laughed ; they drank to her return home. Not the smallest discord disturbed the delightful harmony.

"*A propos,*" said Otto, as they were about to rise from the table, "I have some news." They all looked up at him with curiosity, and he laughed heartily at the impression his words had made. "What is it ?" they all exclaimed.

"Guess, my good people," said Otto, "you shall not have the news so cheap."

"An engagement?" cried Mina.

"Any one dead?" asked Elizabeth, almost at the same moment.

"Don't be so childish, Otto," said Mrs. Welters, with a tinge of sharpness in her tone ; "if you know anything, tell it."

"I am summoned to Beckley to Mr. Arnold professionally."

All, excepting, of course, Emmy, looked astonished, and Elizabeth uttered an exclamation of joy and clapped her hands, whilst she said, "That is splendid ; now we shall know something of the mysterious inhabitants of Beckley, and the wild young lady on the white horse. Otto, how unlucky it is that you cannot take me with you ; do

say, is there no way in which it could be managed?" and Elizabeth's eyes sparked with excitement at the mere idea of it.

"Certainly," said Otto, as if in earnest, "you may dress up as a young man, and go as my secretary or footman. I will tell Mr. Arnold that I am in the habit of having you to stand behind my chair." Elizabeth's merry laugh resounded through the room, and they all rose from the table.

After dinner it was the custom of the Welters family to disperse ; each went his own way, to meet again after a few hours at the tea-table. In the warm summer evenings they used generally to have their tea in the verandah, behind the house, and the tea hour was usually the most sociable in the whole day. And there were almost always visitors at tea-time, for in Dilburg such visits were still in vogue and more in fashion than morning calls ; but the visits which were made at this time of day were not mere visits of ceremony. The gentlemen lighted their cigars, and some even old Dutch pipes, to keep the Burgomaster in company. The ladies took their work out of their work-bags, and if the visitors were not intimate friends, who would certainly stay the whole evening, they would at least remain for an hour or two before anything was said about going away.

And people came readily and often to the Burgomaster's ; both he and his wife were thoroughly hospitable ; they both possessed a certain tact in receiving in an agreeable manner, which made their visitors feel at their ease and at home. In summer they had a little music ; in winter, cards ; but at all times there was a warm welcome. It was only on this first evening of Emmy's arrival, which was of course known all over the town, that people kept away not to disturb the family circle.

During the hours which intervened between dinner and tea on the first evening, Emmy was taken possession of by Eliza-

beth, who conducted her up-stairs to a recently added wing of the house, where were five new adjoining rooms opening into the same landing, and looking out upon the large, pleasant garden.

Two of these rooms were spare rooms, and the other three were arranged for the daughters of the family.

Emmy felt agreeably surprised by the sight of the neatly furnished room which she was to call her own. Not being aware of the new building, she was afraid she should have to share a room with Mina and Elizabeth, and she was too much accustomed to liberty in this respect not to set a value on it.

"Our rooms are next to each other, Emmy ; is not that nice ? I am sure we shall love each other. I have always longed for a sister who would laugh when I am merry, and cry when I am sad, for I don't count Mina, she is so fearfully old ; but we two make such a nice pair ; we shall read together, and in winter go out together. I am so delighted that you are come home."

So chattered Elizabeth, all in one breath, whilst she helped Emmy to unpack her trunks ; then the two girls went down together to the family tea.

An hour later, when they had all assembled in the drawing-room, and Elizabeth was seated at the piano, Otto took his leave.

Before he left the room he looked round once more at the family group, and a feeling of satisfaction arose in his mind as he saw Emmy standing behind Elizabeth at the piano with an expression of content in her face.

As he went out, he said to himself in the fulness of his heart, "I hope you will be happy here, my little Emmy ;" then he hastened down the passage and closed the door after him.

CHAPTER III.

TWO MARTYRS.

It was a sultry summer evening. Betwixt the light and darkness, Otto pursued his way across the market-place already mentioned, into the broad street, where with hasty tread he ascended the steps of a handsome house. Here lived the brother of the first Mrs. Welters, Uncle Van Stein, and his daughter Mary, the same Mary of whom Otto had spoken to Emmy in their walk from the railway station. The bell which Otto pulled cautiously, gave a dull sound as if it were muffled.

It was Mary's slight form which came to meet Otto in the half-lighted passage.

"Softly, Otto," she said, when he had greeted her with a kiss, "papa is poorly this evening ; he did not sleep well last night, and is now resting a little ; come in quietly."

Otto smiled, but in the dim light his smile could not be seen. He knew that "papa is poorly," had the same meaning as when at the French Court it used to be said, "Le prince est nerveux," whenever the Dauphin was naughty like any other human child.

"Papa is poorly," said Mary always, when her papa's humor was somewhat worse than usual, when nothing was to his mind, and no one could make it so.

Of all the unfortunate men in the world—and their name is legion—Mr Van Stein was certainly one of the most unfortunate.

With a fortune which made him independent, and permitted him to gratify all his wishes in reason—with a daughter who loved him and whose patience with him was inexhaustible—he had apparently so much and yet so little, because the only condition for the enjoyment of these advantages—a sound body—was wanting to him.

Mr. Van Stein was one of those victims of the science of medicine whom one too

often meets with, one of those milch cows of the doctors who form the main support of their practice—one of the favorite customers of apothecaries and druggists, who consume annually a quantity of draughts, powders, pills, and other medicaments, more than sufficient to help a healthy man into his grave, but to which a sickly body sometimes offers a wonderful resistance even for years.

For twenty years Uncle Van Stein had been the willing martyr of numberless doctors. He placed great reliance on the science from which he expected his cure. No curative system had been invented which he had not tried—no means of relief which he had not applied—no abstinence to which he had not willingly subjected himself. But he had made himself rather worse than better, and without any definite pain or disease he never felt well. It cannot be denied that in his condition there was much imagination whereby, in a certain sense, he deserved the name of hypochondriac which Otto had given him ; yet there is no doubt that this imagination was in itself a disease, for which one ought to feel compassion. This disease which had gradually come over him had also gradually benumbed his mental faculties.

In his youth he was a pleasant, sociable man, who had read and travelled much, and could talk well ; but although he had taken the degree of Master of Law, he had never had any business. Perhaps it was owing to this that he dwelt so much on himself, and that the seeds of his sickly life were planted. This sickness had become his sole thought ; it had made him cross and fretful, and an anxiety instead of a support to his daughter.

"Don't open the door so wide and make such a wind, Mary," said a cross voice, as Otto and Mary were coming into the room.

"It is me, uncle," said Otto, going up to the invalid, who was sitting in a great chair

by one of the windows, that was quite closed and even protected with felt fastened round the opening, as if the summer temperature did not prevail outside.

It was fearfully hot and close in the room thus shut up, but in Mr. Van Stein's imagination dwelt a spectre, and that spectre was called a draught, and was hopelessly confounded in his mind with the idea of fresh air, of which it made the enjoyment impossible for him.

"Mary tells me that you have not slept well, uncle," said Otto, after he had greeted the invalid.

"I never sleep well."

"You take too little exercise, uncle. We are having such gloriously fine days just now. Why don't you go out? I am sure it would do you good."

"My young friend, you know nothing about the matter. Is it not time for my pills, Mary? You are certain to be after the time. It's late ; I knew it was !"

"It is not five minutes after the time, papa."

"You must be exact. I cannot see why you should be always too soon or too late. And my tea? Am I to get no tea this evening?" He had himself put off the tea in order that he might sleep undisturbed ; but Mary did not remind him of this ; she rang for lights, and silently poured out the water.

Otto sat by Mary at the table, and whilst she was busy with the tea looked at her face, on which there was the expression of goodness and gentleness which had so attracted him. For Mary certainly could not be described as pretty ; her face was what one might call an every-day face. Her figure was slight, and below the middle height, her features irregular, and even the delicate whiteness of her complexion was but the natural compensation of her light, almost red, hair. She was seven-and-twenty, and therefore two years older than Otto ; and in the family circle, when

they were informed of Otto's engagement, they had often asked each other with wonder what he could have found uncommon in the quiet, simple Mary.

Mina, especially, was inexhaustible in her remarks, and seemed to have no greater pleasure than in disparaging Mary's qualities, always, of course, when Otto was not present. She, and she alone, knew that she would fain have had Mary's place in Otto's affections, and had spread her nets in vain for the unsuspecting Otto, for which their apparent relation of brother and sister had given so much opportunity. Had he chosen a younger and prettier girl, Mina would have more readily acquiesced ; but Mary Van Stein was older than Otto, and neither pretty nor clever. Otto's preference was, therefore, a still greater grievance, and gave Mina a feeling of personal injury, which, however, strange to say, she laid to the account more of Mary than of Otto.

But, in fact, Otto himself would have had some difficulty in saying what had attracted him so much in Mary. Was it her goodness and gentleness? was it the refinement of her clear understanding? or was it all these, combined with the simplicity and calmness of her whole nature? He did not know himself how it came about. At first he had looked up to her with a feeling of respect and admiration, for he had so often observed her gentleness and patience in her intercourse with her father, and gradually a warmer feeling was awakened in his breast—it was not love, at least not a passion full of the glow of youth : it was a sensation of pleasure in her presence—a kind of tranquillity and peace of mind, which he found in the steady interchange of thought with that pure, calm woman's heart, and which exercised a refreshing, hallowing influence over him.

On a certain day the thought came to him that Mary would be *par excellence* the

woman to make a husband happy, and when he was alone with her one evening he had asked her whether she would be his wife as soon as his income should admit of his offering her a home.

She looked at him openly and simply, whilst she said :

"I had never ventured to hope that you would become attached to me, Otto : I did not think that domestic happiness was in store for me. Are you quite sure that you love me, and that you will never repent of your choice ? Have you reflected well, that I am ugly, and older than you, and that I shall be comparatively an old woman when you are in the prime of life?"

"For me you will always be pretty, dearest Mary," Otto had replied. "I love you for your good, noble heart, and in my eyes you are more beautiful than any woman I know."

Thus she had then given him her promise.

That same evening Otto spoke to her father, who would not, however, hear of any formal betrothal.

"I cannot spare Mary," he said. "Wait till I am better. There must be no talk of marriage yet. I know how it always is with an engagement. Half the town will come and disturb my rest with their congratulations and folly, and Mary must go out with you the whole day to pay visits. I have nothing to say against you, Otto, and you can come here as often as you like, but I will not hear of an engagement. Mary must herself be aware that my condition is not such as to allow of this being discussed. But she is always thinking only of herself, and her sick father is only an incumbrance ; that I have long known."

They were obliged to be content with his answer. This had happened a few months ago ; so from that day Otto came every evening to spend a few hours with Mary, and to bear with her the fancies

and whims of his uncle. He sometimes brought a book with him to read aloud—at least whenever Mr. Van Stein was well enough, or imagined himself to be well enough, to listen.

Sometimes, when Mary's cheeks were paler than usual, and Otto saw that she wanted fresh air, he would walk with her in the garden, and even take her for an hour to his father's house; and when with her he poured out to her all the thoughts which the past day had suggested. He told her of his business, of the causes he would have to plead, and of the questions brought for his opinion. He spoke of the books he had read, and built castles in the air with her for the future. What these evenings spent in Otto's society were to Mary it would be hard to describe. Otto's love was her star in the night. The hope of the future by his side supported her in the difficult path of life which she had to tread.

In the future she saw the full compensation for her joyless youth. "I could hardly have ventured to expect you the first evening after Emmy's arrival, Otto," said Mary, as they were sitting together at tea.

"On that account I am later than usual. I long for you to know my dear little sister; I have told her the news, and she will come very soon and pay you a visit," Otto added, in a low voice, audible only to Mary.

"You still recollect Emmy, uncle?" he said, somewhat louder; but Uncle Van Stein was not in the humor to think him worthy of an answer.

"I don't know why you are not reading something to me, Otto," he said, in the peevish tone which had become habitual to him. "Mary knows that my head cannot bear this chattering between you to-day. If she would rather go into the garden with you, don't let me hinder you. I am sure I can make my own tea, as

well as Mary makes it, for this weak stuff I can't drink."

Otto had before promised Mary never to be angry with the cross humors of her father; but he felt his blood grow warm at such injustice as this. He bit his lips to restrain himself.

"Shall we take a little turn in the garden, Mary?" he asked.

But Mary laid her hand on his arm, and looking at him, said—

"No, Otto; rather read something, if you will."

The gentle persuasion of her voice and look I cannot give in writing. Otto's anger melted away like snow before the sun. He took the hand, which rested on his arm, pressed a kiss on it, and opened a book which lay before him.

A good hour afterwards Mary led him through the long passage to the front door.

"We have had little of each other this evening, dear Mary," said Otto, as he took leave of her. "I wanted to tell you that I am summoned to Beckley by Mr. Arnold."

"Is it possible, Otto?" said Mary, smiling. "So you will be able to enter the fortress. That will make a pleasant story for to-morrow evening, which I shall look forward to with pleasure."

A moment more, and they had reached the threshold of the front door. The moon shone in the broad street almost with the light of day, the stars twinkled in the clear sky; it was a magnificent summer night.

"How gloriously fresh it is outside here, Otto!" said Mary; "what a splendid moonlight!"

She put her face up towards him, and he was struck with its paleness and weariness.

"Dear child!" he said, earnestly, "I fear your task is too hard for you."

"It is light, since I have had you t

help me bear it, dear Otto. It will be better hereafter," she added, with a gentle smile ; but yet a tear glistened in her eye as she wished him good-night.

CHAPTER IV.

BECKLEY AND ITS INHABITANTS.

It was hardly three years since Otto Welters had established himself as an advocate in his native place, and he had already made his name known by conducting two or three lawsuits to a successful issue. His success, coupled with the favorable circumstances that an old advocate, who had in his hands the principal practice of the place, just at that particular time was compelled by illness to retire, had destroyed the prejudice with which a young man who settles in his native place has most frequently to contend, and doubly so when that native place is a small town. People know that he has gone through his studies and degrees, and they hear it asserted that he is clever ; but they have seen him as a schoolboy, with his hoops and his marbles, and recollect, as if it were but yesterday, how he was running about in jacket and trousers ; and they cannot make the recollection consistent with the idea of the advocate who is to plead their cause, or the doctor who is to cure them. It is recollection, then, which prevents a prophet from being speedily honored in his own country. It chanced, however, that the commune of Dilburg had got into a lawsuit with the commune of Trello about a piece of land near their common boundary, and that Otto had pleaded the cause of his native place, and won it. It chanced, also, that a puffed-up landed proprietor, whom no one could endure, had injured the property of a poor widow by the building of a barn, and Otto's defence of the rights thus invaded had resulted, to the satisfaction of very one, in the demolition of the barn ;

but last, and best of all, some one was good enough to accuse a man of murder, just when Otto wanted such a case to bring to light his eloquence. In this trial, which all the newspapers took notice of, and which attracted the attention of the whole of the Netherlands, Otto was the defender of the accused, and brought him white as snow out of the hands of the advocate for the prosecution, who was well known and long established.

Since that day Otto Welters might regard his future as assured. Clients came in a stream from all quarters, and his consultation hour was more and more attended. It was not, therefore, from the rarity of the occurrence that his summons to Beckley, which he had first mentioned at home, and then to Mary, seemed to make so great an impression on Otto. There must certainly have been some other reason.

And so there was.

For more than half a year this same Beckley had been the favorite subject of Dilburg conversation—the privileged field for conjectures and speculations of every sort, which extended themselves to the most absurd impossibilities.

Beckley was a large estate in the immediate neighborhood of the town, and an old dowager had formerly resided here ; a year or two ago she had exchanged the temporal for the eternal, and her heirs, who were distant relations, and by no means inconsolable, found the property in a dilapidated and neglected condition.

It was resolved to treat the place as a summer residence for the members of the family in common. The requisite alterations and improvements in the house and grounds were completed ; but when it was all in order, it was found that the heirs had just had time to quarrel over the inheritance, and to make their joint possession and residence undesirable and indeed impossible.

On a certain day when the Dilburgers walked out of the town, a notice board announced to them that Beckley was to be let or sold, with immediate possession ; but this immediate possession was not taken advantage of by any one for more than a year. At last, one day, a report went through the town that Beckley was let. A fortnight afterwards the tenants had arrived—a gentleman from India with his daughter, so people told one another. Never before had so many members of the Dilburg *beau monde* walked out of the town gate as on that pleasant autumn day, when the arrival of the tenants was known.

From time immemorial the Dilburgers had enjoyed the right of walking in the grounds of Beckley, and its pleasant lanes and paths had been their favorite resort, and thither they now bent their steps.

There was a path which went so close to the house that one could peep at the inhabitants without any difficulty. During the residence of the old dowager, and her old *dame de compagnie*, people had not used this path more than others ; but without doing any injustice to the Dilburgers, I venture to state that on that day, but for an unforeseen circumstance, it would have been the most frequented of any. This unforeseen circumstance, however, manifested itself in the shape of a little white board over the locked gate, which announced in black letters, "No admission to the public." It was these few words that the Dilburgers read and re-read ; it was these words which excited a ferment in their minds bordering on sedition, and which led them back to the town in a state of indescribable excitement.

This right of way for pedestrians was the incontestable right of the Dilburgers. This right of way must and should be restored, and every inhabitant should co-operate towards this object to the utmost of his power.

The plan of an address with a hundred

signatures was reserved for their last *coup*. It was decided, in the first place, that Burgomaster Welters should pay a friendly visit of welcome to this new member of the community, and on this occasion should plead the good old right of the town.

Burgomaster Welters went.

Fully impressed with his own dignity and with the importance of his mission, he gave his card to the old man-servant who opened the door, and the Burgomaster was prepared to follow him, when the man returned with the message that Mr. Arnold begged to be excused, for he was indisposed and could receive no one.

With his tail between his legs (to apply this common saying with all respect to the good Burgomaster), he came back to the town.

But Dilburg would not allow itself to be so easily discouraged. Dominie Swart, the minister of the Reformed Church, went a few days later as ambassador extraordinary to Beckley.

Mr. Arnold begged to be excused, was indisposed, could receive no one, and did not belong to the Reformed congregation.

Now went the Lutheran minister, and the like formula was made use of, with the addition that Mr. Arnold did not belong to the Lutheran congregation.

The Dilburgers now sprang their last mine, in the person of the old Roman Catholic priest, but with the same, or rather without any result. Mr. Arnold did not belong to the Catholic Church, was indisposed, begged to be excused, but could receive no one.

Dilburg, to speak figuratively, sat with her hands in her hair.

There was now nothing left but to launch the intended address, with more than two hundred signatures ; but, to the indescribable wrath of the Dilburgers, only half an hour later the address was sent back to the town hall, and with only this word on the margin, "Declined."

By the few thousand tongues which were at the service of the town, the unknown resident at Beckley was henceforth cursed and dragged through the dirt. That he was a heathen, that he had strange things on his conscience which made him shun people, were but trifling specimens of the absurdities which people told to one another.

But even this much was hardly known with certainty, that Mr. Arnold had been a resident in Java—(“A resident there is the same as a slave-owner,” said the grocer’s wife to her neighbor at the ironmonger’s shop); that the old man who opened the door came from Rotterdam ; and that, besides these, the resident at Beckley had brought with him, what people in Dilburg called a couple of black servants. Of the daughter, people only knew that she was of dark complexion, and that very early in the morning she had been once seen by an early riser who was taking his morning walk, riding on a beautiful white horse, but she rushed by him in so wild a gallop that he had not time sufficiently to observe her.

People knew, further, that a celebrated physician from the capital made visits to Beckley, which were regularly repeated every five or six weeks. This was all that they knew for certain, except that Mr. Arnold had returned the visit of the Burgomaster by sending his card.

But however interesting a subject of conversation may be, there comes a time when, from want of material, it will be exhausted ; and such was the case in Dilburg with respect to Beckley and its inhabitants. When six months had elapsed without people knowing more than they did on the first day, and when the hope of again opening the right of way seemed to have disappeared for good, people at last considered the matter as a *fait accompli*, and almost ceased to think or talk about it. Under all these circumstances, however, it seems to me

that no one will be surprised that the summons of Otto Welters to the much discussed Beckley became an interesting affair to everybody.

It was eleven o’clock in the morning when Otto left his lodgings, and walked out of the town gate to obey the summons, and hardly ten minutes later he stood upon the dyke which formed the high road, and from which the Beckley estate lay before him as in a hollow. The meadows and woods were below him, and the brook which flowed round the house, making almost an island of the knoll on which it was built. *

There was something picturesque in the house with its bright terrace, where the flower-beds, glowing in the sunlight, displayed to the admiring eye a glittering chequer of beautiful colors. There was something picturesque also in the house itself, with the light yellow tint of its walls and pillars contrasting strongly with the dark-green background of the knoll crowned with high trees, and with the darker yellow jalousies, which were all closed to keep out the warm June sun.

Otto paused an instant to look at the view before he opened the great iron entrance-gate. Slowly he walked along the crisp gravel walk, recognizing right and left the old well-known paths, which in the trim neatness of careful keeping up had never appeared to him so pretty as now, and seemed doubly beautiful as a *Paradise Lost*. The bell gave a clear, heavy sound when Otto rang it, and almost immediately the door was opened by the old servant, who was already so well known in Dilburg by his messages of refusal.

“Is Mr. Arnold at home?” asked Otto, while preparing to hand in his card—an act rendered superfluous by the servant saying, “My master expects you ; be so good as to follow me.”

Otto followed him along a broad marble passage, leading quite through the house

to a door of colored glass, which admitted a view of landscape behind the house in fantastic colors. In the middle of the passage was a side staircase, which they went up, and having walked through a long gallery up-stairs, the servant took hold of the handle of a door. "Mr. Welters, I believe?" he asked, stopping for a moment. On Otto's assenting, he opened the door and ushered him in, giving his name loudly. Otto walked into the room. It was a large, lofty apartment; the half-closed blinds spread an agreeable softly tempered light compared with the glaring sunlight outside. Large wide bookcases covered the three walls where there were no windows, and by one of the windows stood a large writing-table, at which a gentleman was sitting, who got up at Otto's entrance, and came forward a few steps to meet him.

He was a man of middle height, with a peculiar sun-burnt complexion, indicating a long residence in tropical climates; but in him this tint was moreover blended with a sickly yellow, which had even spread into the whites of his eyes. One would have given him fifty years of age at a guess, with his dark hair and beard mingled with gray, and it was a lean, bony hand which he held out to Otto.

"I must make my excuses, Mr. Welters, for having requested you to take the trouble of coming to me. . . . But I beg your pardon"—he interrupted himself while he looked at Otto with some surprise—"have I the pleasure of seeing Advocate Welters?"

Otto assured him that he was the man in question.

"This is the difference then, between imagination and reality," said Mr. Arnold, smiling. "I have learnt to know you from your defence of that murderer Diggers, whom you so cleverly got acquitted from the charge against him, although for my part I am convinced that the fellow was guilty; but I have not admired your talent less on that account. In my thoughts,

however, I pictured to myself the advocate as a man of middle age; and hence my surprise now I meet a young man."

"Youth is a fault which diminishes every day," said Otto to Mr. Arnold, laughing.

"As far as that goes, I wish it could be made a reproach to myself," answered Mr. Arnold. "But take a seat, Mr. Welters. I am aware that your time is valuable, and I will therefore at once make you acquainted in a few words with the nature of the subject on which I wish to call in your advice and assistance."

Getting up he took a parcel of papers from his writing-table and placed them by him. Otto watched him in all his movements with involuntary wonder. His time had been too fully occupied with pressing business to allow of his indulging in conjectures respecting the *personnel* of the resident at Beckley, as most of the Dilburgers had done; but unconsciously, and owing to the arbitrary conclusions of Dilburg society, a certain portrait of misanthropy, or at all events of singularity, not at all resembling Mr. Arnold as he stood before him, had become fixed in his imagination. Neither in his exterior nor in his manner was he different from the ordinary type of a gentleman, with a calm, serious face, and a smile upon his lips which gave something half-sarcastic, half-melancholy to the expression of his countenance.

But, whatever might be Otto's meditations on this subject, they were broken off by the attention he had to bestow on the words of Mr. Arnold when he began to speak.

"I must begin by telling you, Mr. Welters, that a short time ago I read in the newspaper that somewhere in North Brabant—I think at Leeuwenberg House—an old gentleman died who by his will bequeathed his immense wealth to the person who should be able to prove that he had descended in the direct line from

the well-known Martin van Rossom, with whom he thought he was connected. I read it without paying much attention to it ; but a day or two ago, when accidentally rummaging through old papers, I found a letter from my grandfather to my mother, in which he speaks of this Martin van Rossom as the ancestor of my family. I immediately looked up all the family papers in my possession, and I wish to know from you what appears to be wanting in these papers, and in what terms the claim to this inheritance can be made. As regards the money, all men are avaricious ; therefore I suppose you may consider me avaricious, Mr. Welters. I have, Heaven be praised, more than I require ; but if I now saw the chance of acquiring a few pretty millions for my daughter, I should not like this chance to slip through my fingers."

"And you would be very foolish if you did," answered Otto. "Did not Martin van Rossom live in the fifteenth century?"

"Yes ; but you also find him mentioned in the beginning of the sixteenth century. I hit upon this in the history of my country, and I remarked that, if it were not for the inheritance, we should rather decline having such an ancestor. He amassed his riches by plundering, murdering and robbing ; but freebootery seemed then to be a well-received occupation, and it may always be a question, even now, whether that money was not as honorably earned as that acquired by many traders and speculators on the Stock Exchange in the present time. At all events, it is sufficiently purified by the centuries which have now passed to prevent one from feeling any scruples about it. I wish, therefore, to ask you to be good enough to peruse these papers in any time at your disposal, and to communicate to me, when you have arrived at it, the result of your investigation."

"With pleasure, Mr. Arnold, and I

hope your claim can be proved ; it shall not be my fault if it is not, of that you may be quite sure."

Otto took up the papers, and, turning them slowly over, he asked for some information, which Mr. Arnold gave him. At last Otto packed everything in a large parcel, and while he was thus occupied, he asked, "Do you like your residence at Beckley, Mr. Arnold ?"

"I like being at Beckley as well as anywhere else in Holland. That means not very much. I am an old retired Indian, Mr. Welters, and more attached to Java, where I have spent such a great part of my life, than I can tell you ; but when the doctors say, "Go to Holland, man, or we shall bury you here in six months," then one has little choice. A sick resident is not worth much, but a dead one still less."

"And have you found the good effects of your native climate ?" said Otto.

"Yes, in so far as it's a question of prolonging life, not of restoration of health, I do find its good effects."

He was silent a few moments ; then, as if inspired by a thought, he went on with considerable animation—

"I wish to live long enough to gather the fruits of my twenty years' labor, and to see the work on Java, which I have undertaken, in print ; I am ready then to lay my head down and let others complete what I have begun. I don't know, Mr. Welters, whether you feel any interest in the condition of the colonies. There are, I believe, very few Dutchmen who take the interest in it that it deserves. As every year the millions come over which are to strengthen our exchequer, people seldom ask in what manner they are obtained, and do not think of the condition of those by whose labor the millions are provided. The malpractices at the expense of the poor Javanese, which cling like stains to the money, are matters of

indifference to them. I had rather attribute this indifference to ignorance. For me the study of the country and the people in which I have found a second fatherland, has been the labor of my life. It was the object of my life to protect these people, and to raise them from their state of oppression to the place which belongs to them by right and justice. What I could do in my own neighborhood and position, for the improvement of their lot, I have done always, as far as was possible with the tied hands of a dependent government employee; but in the middle of work my health failed me, and now it is only my pen that can be employed for the Javanese."

There was an expression of melancholy in his voice which struck Otto; but before he could say anything, Mr. Arnold proceeded—"The fear that death may come upon me, before I have said what I wish to say, makes me labor uninterruptedly; the work has made a hermit of me, Mr. Welters; but not only the task which I have laid upon myself and wish to complete, but also the feeling that, through my long absence and protracted residence in the wilderness, I am no longer in my place in European society. I have outgrown Dutch habits, or Dutch habits have outgrown me—we do not understand each other any more."

Now the sarcastic had the upper hand in the countenance of Mr. Arnold; but this expression again made way for the mournful, as he said, "The great mistake is that although my daughter and I are obliged to be here with our bodies, our hearts still live in the warm East. And that makes us bad citizens for our mother country," he added, with a smile.

"Yes, it is a solitary life for a young lady, Mr. Arnold."

"Not more solitary than she has been accustomed to all her life. We have lived mostly in the interior of Java, where for miles you could not find a European in

the neighborhood. A child of nature, such as my daughter, finds resources of which the accomplished, delicately brought up European lady can form no idea. It is indeed by her wish that we have withdrawn ourselves here to Beckley, for the life at the Hague, where we established ourselves at first, pleased her as little as it did myself."

Mr. Arnold here ceased speaking while he listened to the step of a horse, which stopped under the window. This time it was a cheerful smile which played on his lips.

"Here comes my daughter home," he said, and turning from the window to Otto, he went on—"I have behaved like an old babbler, Mr. Welters. If, for once, I meet with some one who can understand me, forgive me if I quite forget that he is not an old acquaintance who can take an interest in me and in my endeavors."

Otto took up his hat, which lay near him on the ground, and was assuring Mr. Arnold, as he rose, how much interest the conversation had afforded him, and with what pleasure he made his acquaintance, but, before he had said all this, Mr. Arnold interposed—

"See, Mr. Welters," he said, "I am so little acquainted with the habits of my native country, that I don't know whether it is contrary to etiquette if I ask you to our luncheon, which will be ready immediately. In India this would be a matter of course, and if you will join for once in this our Indian habit, it would give me great pleasure."

He said this in a cordial, good-natured manner, which made it impossible to refuse; but, before Otto could answer, the door was burst open and a great black dog of the Newfoundland breed rushed in. He was a beautiful animal, with long black shining hair, to which his white breast and the white tip of his grand feathering tail alone made exceptions. In two bounds

he reached Mr. Arnold and licked his hand. He then went to Otto, examining him and smelling him all round. "Here, Cæsar, it is a friend," cried Mr. Arnold to the dog. The animal instantly obeyed, but not without carefully keeping his eye upon Otto from his place at the feet of the master, where he lay down.

But Otto did not notice the dog. His whole attention was fixed on the young lady who stood in the doorway.

In a dark riding-habit which hung down behind in a long train, and before was partly drawn over her arm ; a round black hat on her head, of which the white ostrich feather rested on her black hair ; the beautiful form of her slight figure perfectly indicated by her close-fitting habit ; a little whip in the hand which was free, Celine Arnold stood still an instant on the threshold, when she saw her father was not alone.

"Celine, child, here is Advocate Welters, whom you know I was to consult about the inheritance."

"Oh, yes," said the young lady, who did not appear more than seventeen or eighteen, and now coming nearer ; she responded to Otto's bow, not with a courtesy as one would have expected, but with a graceful movement of her whip, such as one sees done by the riders in the circus. Further than this, she took no notice of him, and there was no trace of embarrassment in the way in which she greeted her father with a kiss.

"A pleasant ride, dear child?" said her father.

"Not so much a ride as a practice, dear father. I have been teaching Schimmel what was wanting in his education, to leap over ditches ; and Cæsar for his own pleasure leapt over them too. Didn't you, Cæsar?" She laughed loud at the recollection of the pleasure she had enjoyed ; but suddenly recovering herself, she said,—

"But I am sure I have kept you and Mr. Welters waiting. In ten minutes I

shall have changed my dress. You must, therefore, still have patience." And turning round, she, and Cæsar after her, were out of the room in a trice.

The whole of this scene had occupied less time than it has taken to tell. Otto stood motionless in the same attitude as when she entered, and only came to his senses when she left the room. Never yet had he been so much struck with the beauty of a woman as with that of Celine Arnold.

Undoubtedly of an Eastern type, Celine had the pale olive complexion which characterizes those of Creole descent ; her features were fine and regular ; and when she laughed her parted lips displayed two rows of pearl-white teeth ; but people overlooked these attractions when they saw her great dark eyes with their soft glow, and the richness of her thick black hair.

Otto sat down again opposite Mr. Arnold ; but he listened now with much less attention than he had done to their first conversation, and he was glad when, a quarter of an hour later, a Javanese servant, in his strange costume, interrupted them with a few Malay words, addressed to Mr. Arnold, which were unintelligible to Otto.

"Let me show you the way," Mr. Arnold said to Otto ; and, going downstairs, they came into a small cozy dining-room, where the table was laid for luncheon.

Celine stood by the table, and at her feet was Cæsar, with whom she appeared to have been playing when Otto and her father entered, at least she raised herself from a stooping position.

As she stood there in a purple jacket trimmed with gold, a long black silk dress without a trace of crinoline, which in those days had just attained in Dilburg its widest circumference ; her beautiful hair in picturesque confusion, half hanging down behind and half fastened up by a little gold dagger with a diamond handle ; sparkling

jewels in her ears, and on her small elegantly formed hands—as she stood there she seemed to Otto the most beautiful woman he had ever seen, and her singular dress seemed to complete the harmony of the whole effect. They sat down to the table. Behind Celine's chair, which was placed between the two gentlemen, stood an old Java woman. The Javanese who had announced luncheon had placed himself behind the chair of Mr. Arnold, whilst the Dutch servant waited upon Otto.

Strange dishes were placed before him. Rice and chicken were the only things known to him, and every dish was highly seasoned and cooked with hot pickles, which threatened to burn Otto's Dutch mouth.

"This is just an Indian luncheon, Mr. Welters," said Mr. Arnold, when the servants, after setting the fruit on the table, had left the room. "Celine and I cannot be content at this time of day with a cup of coffee only, as is the custom in Holland."

As yet Otto had spoken very little to Celine. To the ordinary question of courtesy, "how she liked Holland," her answer was almost to the same effect as her father's,—"that here it was good, but in India it was better. There the sun is warmer, the flowers are prettier, the people are more cordial—at least so it seems to me." She said this with a moist glance in her dark eyes, caused, apparently, by the recollection of her native country. An instant of silence followed; then she shook her head as if to drive away sorrowful thoughts, and turning to Otto she said, in a cheerful tone:

"And so you are going to provide us with an inheritance, Mr. Welters?"

"At least I am going to do my best, Miss Arnold."

"Dear father, what shall you do with all that money? Haven't we enough?"

"Enough is good; but more is better," answered her father, with a laugh.

And now the dessert was removed, and the host handed his cigar-case to Otto.

"Won't it annoy Miss Arnold?" asked Otto, courteously, before he took out a cigar.

"Not more than my cigar will annoy you," answered Celine, showing her white teeth with a laugh; and before Otto well understood what she meant, she had already a cigar between her lips. It was with a feeling of disappointment that Otto saw her smoke. He could not explain to himself that feeling; but so it was. But neither Celine nor her father seemed to think it anything uncommon; they smoked and chatted and laughed, and seemed as much at their ease with Otto as if they had been acquaintances of years instead of hours. They interrogated him about his family and relatives, and about Dilburg and its inhabitants, and she looked as merry and contented as possible, every moment breaking out into a clear laugh, in which one could hardly have helped joining, although there was little to occasion it.

"Will you play or sing something, Celine, as you are accustomed to do?" said Mr. Arnold, at last, whilst he opened the piano which was in the dining-room. "I am sure Mr. Welters would like to hear you."

"No, dear father," said Celine, in a decisive tone, "not to-day."

"And why not, child?"

"Because I don't feel inclined."

This reason seemed to Mr. Arnold conclusive—at least he shut the piano without saying another word.

Otto, however, could not withstand the temptation of saying, in a slightly satirical tone, "And do you never do anything except what you are inclined to do, Miss Arnold? That must be a pleasant kind of life."

She cast a dark glance at him out of her

great eyes, and there was a sort of defiance in her voice when she answered, evidently out of humor :

"No ; and what I have once said that I won't do, I don't do."

Mr. Arnold now got up hastily from the table, and conducted his guest to the orangery, where he showed him a foreign plant of which they had spoken.

"This nursery is a hobby of Celine's," he said, pointing to a long row of flower-pots, with all kinds of cuttings and plants. "With these she occupies most of her mornings. The flowers on the terrace are almost all the result of her care and industry this last winter."

A few minutes afterwards Otto took his leave.

"I hope soon to see you again, Mr. Welters," said Mr. Arnold, in a cordial tone, whilst Otto thanked him for his friendly reception.

Celine had now joined them again, and she put out her hand to Otto to take leave, shaking his in an off-hand "comrade" fashion, saying, "And when you come again, Mr. Welters, you shall make acquaintance with my Schimmel, who is my dearest friend in Holland."

Otto Welters was that day an interesting person in Dilburg, for naturally everybody knew before noon that he had passed some hours at Beckley, and everybody hoped that he would satisfy their pent-up curiosity. Some people who were not in the habit of addressing him availed themselves of the subject of "fine weather" to speak to Otto in the street, and at the club he was looked for with an anxiety which made his absence, to say the least, unpardonable.

But Otto told people very little about the inhabitants of Beckley. A good old gentleman and a pretty daughter, both cordial persons who required his services as advocate. That was all people got out of him. In his family circle he told something more; and in the evening he told

Mary almost everything. I say "almost," because as to the manner in which Celine had refused her father's request, and of the smoking, he told nobody.

"Why not?"

CHAPTER V.

OLD FRIENDS AND NEW ACQUAINTANCES.

A few days after Emmy's arrival at her father's house, she began to pay visits to the few persons whom she had known as a child.

Her first visit was to Mary Van Stein, who had only lived a few years at Dilburg with her father; and, although a first cousin, Emmy, as far as she could remember, had never seen her before. Uncle Van Stein she scarcely knew except by name. Since the time when he had once been to stay with her aunt for a few weeks, she had seldom or never given him a thought. But now the closer relation in which Otto stood to Mary considerably heightened her interest in both father and daughter.

Fortunately, Uncle Van Stein was somewhat less unpleasant that day than usual; indeed, there was a trace of interest in the manner in which he sat and looked at Emmy, who was a speaking likeness of her mother.

The conversation at first turned chiefly on the aunt with whom Emmy had lived during the last six years, and who was also a sister of Mr. Van Stein, so that Mary stood in the same relation to her as Emmy did. It was a real pleasure to Emmy to be able to revive recollections of the good old aunt, with those who had known and loved her. Uncle Van Stein was also inexhaustible in his questions about her malady.

"Just, just the same," he said, nodding his head approvingly, as Emmy described each symptom; "just like me in the pain in my chest, and the weariness in my limbs. Mary will not believe it, Emmy, but it will end with me just in the same way as with

my poor sister," said the persistently morbid invalid.

"The doctor, however, found you much better this morning, dear papa," Mary remarked.

"Better—oh yes! I am always better, as you tell people; it is easy to pronounce a person better although he does not feel so himself,"—and the ill-tempered, injured tone in which he spoke increased the ungraciousness of his words.

Mary was silent, and one could only have seen by the slight increase of her color as she bent over her work that it annoyed her to be so spoken to in Emmy's presence.

During the whole of this long visit, Emmy kept looking at Mary with wonder. Although fully prepared to find no beauty in her, she had unconsciously expected something more in the girl who had won Otto's heart. Yet she was struck by the gentleness which expressed itself in Mary's countenance, and which was not belied by her behavior to her father; for in the course of conversation, Mr. Van Stein found incessant opportunities of venting his ill-humor on her. This gentleness opened Emmy's heart to the future sister-in-law whom she welcomed in Mary.

Emmy, when she took leave, said, in a playful tone, as she kissed her—

"They say that sisters-in-law are each other's natural enemies, Mary! Will that be the case with us?"

She expected an answer in the same tone, but a joke was quite foreign to Mary's grave nature.

"May Heaven grant that we shall be sisters, not merely in name, dear Emmy! Love me a little for Otto's sake; that you are his sister is a sufficient reason for my loving you."

As she walked on, Emmy kept thinking about "Otto's Mary," as she called her. Otto so lively, and Mary so quiet and grave; she could not manage to bring

these two ideas into one, much as she tried to do so.

But soon her thoughts took another direction, and she involuntarily delayed her steps, as she turned down the road to the iron foundry which was at the end of the town.

The foundry, which gave employment to a hundred Dilburgers, was the property of Mr. Eversberg, whose son, Bruno, Emmy had met on her first walk towards home.

There was a history attached to the iron founder, Eversberg, and, for a history in real life, a very improbable one it was. At a time not so very far distant, this same Eversberg had entered the foundry, of which he was now both owner and manager, as an apprentice. Five and thirty years had passed since he, the son of a needy widow belonging to the small bourgeoisie, must have regarded his admission even to a very subordinate post there as a piece of good fortune, and in his boldest dreams he could never have had before his eyes the reality of to-day.

By industry and attention he had known how to win in a few years the favor and confidence of his master to such a degree, that almost the whole management of the foundry had rested with him; and when the only son of the house so misconducted himself that he was obliged to take himself off to America, on his father refusing him all further aid, old Müller made no secret of his intention to make young Eversberg his successor and heir.

But a tragedy was bound up with the fulfilment of this determination. A clerk, who, though generally suspected to be a bad fellow, was taken by old Müller into his service out of compassion, robbed the counting-house, and the old man was found close to his strong box, where he had probably caught his clerk in the act, murdered, and with his brains dashed out. Young Eversberg was just then on a

journey of business for the foundry, when the murder and robbery (they missed to the value of 100,000 guilders in cash and bills) took place.

When he returned he was congratulated as the owner of the foundry and of the possessions of old Müller, who had disinherited his son as far as the law permitted him to do so.

The address of the son not being known, he was summoned in the newspapers to take possession of his lawful share of the inheritance, but up to this time, now twenty-seven years ago, nothing more had been heard of him, nor had the police succeeded in earning the large sum which Eversberg had placed on the head of the murderer. It was conjectured that he had escaped to America in a well-got-up disguise; afterwards it was thought that they were on his track in Australia, but nothing was known with certainty.

Thus Eversberg was now the owner and head of the foundry, which under his management slowly reached a development that made it take rank amongst the most important works in the country.

A short time after his entering upon this ownership, Eversberg, who was now called Mr. Eversberg, obtained for his wife Johanna van Reenen, the loveliest and most sought-after young lady in the town. Many persons might have felt surprised that he should have ventured to aspire to her, the representative of an old patrician name. Her relations could not find words to express their contempt for this *nouveauriche*; but Johanna, who was of age, and was responsible to no one, married him in spite of all prejudices, and thus contributed more to his elevation in society than the possession of the foundry or his wealth could have done. But for this marriage, he would not have been received for a long period of years, if ever, into that circle of society in Dilburg which called itself the first. To exclude him, however, was now

to exclude Johanna van Reenen; and at last people came to the conclusion that as she had found him good enough to marry, they might easily find him good enough to converse with, and to partake of the liberal hospitality which, from the moment of his marriage, he had offered to them in his house at the foundry.

This was fully twenty-five years ago; and now no one ever thought of disputing the place which the rich Eversberg occupied in the society of the town.

His dependants revered and loved him, and his munificence had become almost a proverb. All the benevolent institutions of the town found a firm support in the Eversberg iron founder. Indeed, one half of the cost of the new hospital now building was presented to the town of Dilburg by the Eversberg couple on the occasion of their silver wedding.

Two months since they had built a new house in the immediate neighborhood of the foundry. At the extremity of the town, where the ground rises, the great dark buildings were to be seen, forming a background to a new bright mansion, and thither Emmy's steps were directed.

Mrs. Eversberg and the first Mrs. Welters were in their girlhood the most intimate friends, and, what was more, continued to be so after the marriage of both. The two families saw each other every day, and the children grew up together almost as one family.

Otto, and Bruno, the only child of the Eversbergs, differed too much in age to feel a positive friendship for each other. That feeling is almost impossible between a boy of fourteen and a boy of ten, or later between a young man of eighteen and a schoolboy of fourteen. Hence it easily came to pass that Bruno took more to Emmy, and was, as it were, a younger brother between Otto and Emmy.

He was a wild, unmanageable boy, was Bruno Eversberg, and those who had to

do with him found him quite a handful ; consequently the influence which little Emmy exercised over him in those days was all the more wonderful. What scolding and punishing would not make him do, a single word from Emmy would often accomplish.

"Don't do it, Bruno ; I shall be so sorry if you do, Bruno." He was not proof against such words from Emmy, and at once the intended reply, the obstinate opposition, the angry passion, gave way.

With what admiring affection Emmy, who was three years younger, looked up to this wild boy, who in his intercourse with her renounced his whole nature, it would be hard to describe. Emmy also remembered that, except the death of her mother, there had been no greater sorrow to her in the years of her childhood than Bruno's departure for the military academy, which had taken place the year before ; for no persuasion was able to move Bruno to allow himself to be brought up as his father's successor in the business. The naval service was the ideal of his dreams, and neither coaxings nor threats could turn him from it.

It was a bitter disappointment to Mr. Eversberg ; but at last, when Bruno's mother went over to his side, Mr. Eversberg was persuaded to give way.

"Give the boy his fancy, father," she said ; "let him cool his wild young blood abroad. The time is sure to come when he will return to us. Let it be his own fault, and not ours, if our child is not happy."

So Bruno went to Breda, where in those days the education of naval officers was provided for. Three years later he made a voyage to America as a cadet, and now he was come back with his epaulettes on his shoulders and the Order of William on his breast, after a three years' service in India. All this Emmy had to think over as she bent her steps to the iron foundry. As

she drew nearer a certain feeling of timidity came over her which caused her to slacken her steps.

She could not deny to herself that Bruno had been cold and stiff to her at their first meeting. Her whole heart had, as it were, gone out to meet the friend of her childhood, and he had not spoken a single cordial word which could make her think of the past.

Had Bruno become in a few years so cold as to forget how they once loved one another as brother and sister ? or did he wish to show her that their behavior to each other must now be altered with their ages ? The blood rushed into Emmy's face at this last supposition, and she was almost annoyed that she had greeted him by the familiar name of their childhood ; but she made up her mind so far, that if Bruno did not care any more for her, she at least would not trouble him with her affection.

But all these resolutions melted away at the hearty embrace with which Mrs. Eversberg received her.

"It is as if I saw my good Anna again before me," she said, with tears in her eyes, whilst she raised Emmy's face towards her. "Well, child, you have not quite learned to forget Aunt Johanna. If you had not come to me to-day, I should have gone to you this evening with Bruno, for I could not any longer restrain my anxiety to see my dear little Emmy back again amongst us."

She seated herself with Emmy on the sofa, and taking Emmy's hand in hers, they were sitting comfortably chatting together, when Bruno came in. Emmy could not now accuse him of stiffness or coldness. With a glance of pleasure, a slight blush came over his countenance as he looked at her, and there was warmth enough in the cordial shake of his hand, and in the unfeigned emotion in his voice when he said—

"Well, Emmy, it is like old times to see you amongst us."

"It seems to me exactly as if it were yesterday when I saw you about me as children," said Mrs. Eversberg. "Should you have known Bruno directly, Emmy?"

"Oh, yes," said Emmy, but she felt somewhat confused, when she looked up at Bruno and met his eye. It was a good, open countenance which she saw before her, rendered more agreeable by the merry laugh which showed his white teeth, but with no other pretensions to good looks. To Emmy it seemed so exactly the face of his boyish years, the same frank look, the same fair hair of which the obstinate curls hanging over his forehead had to be constantly pushed back, but the light moustache which overshadowed his upper lip was an improvement which was new to her.

"You have had a good look at the world since we last saw each other, Bruno," said Emmy, after a short silence.

"I have at least seen enough to know that from east to west home is best."

"Then we may hope to keep him here all the longer," said Mrs. Eversberg to Emmy.

"As far as I am concerned, the longer the better," said Bruno; "but, mamma, I saw Emmy looking round just as I did when I first came to this house. Tell us, Emmy, do you not agree with me? you are disappointed not to find the old house with the old furniture and the old garden."

"Admiration of the new does not drive out the memory of the old, Bruno," answered Emmy with a laugh.

"And so it is with me, Emmy; but you have not made any long tedious voyages as I have, in which the pleasantest occupation was to bring to one's mind the old home, with its thousand well-known spots, in connection with all the agreeable recollections of childhood—and then to come home, Emmy, and to find not one stone upon another of the old house—to

be received in a new house with new furniture, to go round it with the feeling of a cat in a new warehouse, and all this to be intended as an agreeable surprise." He said this in a tragic-comic tone which made Mrs. Eversberg and Emmy laugh.

But Bruno went on in the same tone—"If ever I was glad that it was not in the power of man to put a new head on old shoulders, it was when I came home. I am sure, Emmy, that had it been possible for the old people in their desire for renovation to have received me with a pair of young faces"—

Here his mother interrupted him.

"But, Bruno, how could we know that you were so attached to the old-fashioned tumble-down house?"

"Don't you recollect the garret where we used to like to play, Emmy?" asked Bruno.

"That I do," said Emmy "with the pretty little diamond panes set in lead, through which we saw the outer world looking so green."

"And, Emmy, the passage into which all the rooms opened with steps up and down."

"Where I once tumbled down so cleverly when we were playing at prison-bars," answered Emmy, merrily.

"Oh, yes," she continued; "the steps I remember well, as I do everything else of those days. I have so often thought of it all at Amsterdam, and now I am here again it comes back to my mind more clearly than ever."

And now they found further, in "don't you remember?" an inexhaustible source of conversation. They were certainly matters of little interest which were called to mind, and would weary you if I were to describe them here; but to Bruno and Emmy they seemed to be the most interesting things in the world.

And Mrs. Eversberg sat by and listened to them with the greatest pleasure, and now

and then joined in the laugh of which some comical recollection or other was the cause.

An hour passed away before any of the three were aware of it. Emmy was the first who remembered the time ; she rose immediately to go away.

"Won't you stay to dinner, dear child?" said Mrs. Eversberg. "My husband will certainly be most glad to see you, and he does not return from the foundry till dinner-time."

But Emmy dared not accept the invitation, for it was only the third day of her being at home, and she feared more than anything to do what might displease her stepmother. She excused herself and took her leave.

"May I call you Aunt Johanna, as I used to do? I have always thought of you as Aunt Johanna," said Emmy before she went away.

"I could not bear to hear you say Mrs. to mamma," answered Bruno for his mother. "I never could have done it to your mother, however old and grave we might have become! And we are getting on in that direction. Eh, Emmy?"

His laugh had the old cheery ring which Emmy well remembered. When she gave him her hand on leaving, it seemed as if the years during which they had not seen each other were but a dream. With a light and cheerful heart she hastened home-wards. The very next day Bruno called at tea-time, and before a few weeks had passed had become almost a daily guest in the Welters' family.

These few weeks, if not quite enough to make Emmy feel at home in her new position, were long enough to teach her its peculiarities.

In the first place, Emmy felt grateful for the hearty kindness of Otto, who, having to divide his time between business and Mary Van Stein, could not be much with her ; but he never let a day pass without

giving her some proof, either by word or deed, of the cordial brotherly love which he felt for her.

Her relations with Elizabeth were also all that she could wish. With the ardor of her sixteen years Elizabeth had conceived at first sight, an affection for Emmy which reminded one of the attachment of a faithful dog. But in development she was too far behind Emmy for the affection which existed between them to become a definite friendship. She was so very childish for her age that, however much Emmy might love her and be pleased by her devotion, yet she could not make a friend or confidant of her.

Elizabeth's exaggerated feelings were not in Emmy's nature ; and cheerful and good-humored as Emmy was, she had acquired, owing to having lived so long with her old aunt, and to her separate education, a certain sedateness which, although not inconsistent with her age of eighteen, is seldom found in so young a girl.

Elizabeth's attention to Emmy bordered on the oppressive. All day and at all hours she was by Emmy's side, and tried to imitate her in everything relating to dress or manner ; and she steadfastly repelled all Mina's spiteful and sneering remarks, without letting them disturb her admiration of Emmy.

And now, speaking of Mina, I must say that with her Emmy was not on such good terms. She had done her best, but without much result. I should like to be able to state that she nevertheless redoubled her efforts, and that, although repeatedly thrust back, she had continued to treat Mina with the same love and gentleness ; but I must adhere strictly to the truth, and I must not represent Emmy as an angel, for, in fact, she was just a nice girl, and not baked of better dough than other people's children. She soon ceased to take any notice of Mina ; adopted a cool, polite manner towards her, and took little further

trouble about her ; but permitted herself, by way of a little quiet revenge, to keep watch on Mina's efforts and doings, and to amuse herself with them.

For a new star had begun to glimmer on Mina's matrimonial horizon, in the shape of a certain Captain Uno, who had joined the garrison at Dilburg, and had been introduced to Burgomaster Welters, and gradually became a frequent visitor.

In point of fact, Captain Uno was, in all respects, an utterly insignificant man ; what he was as an officer I naturally cannot judge, but this is certain, that the military service had completely taken possession of the little understanding he ever had. All his conversation set out from that service, and came back to it again.

Seen through his eyes, the world was a great cavalry barrack, where he himself, though but a captain, played an important part.

That he was of good family, and had a stiver or two of money, made him not less important in his own eyes, and not less so in the eyes of Mina de Graaff, who for the moment treated him as the chosen of her heart. By Mina, this was as much as to say that she had gone so far to meet him on the matrimonial road, that the most timid lover had but a very little step to make in order to arrive at the great word which was Mina's dream.

But Captain Uno was just like so many of his predecessors ; no one could feel sure that, at the eleventh hour, he would not find the means of slipping away by a by-path.

This uncertainty rendered Mina in the highest degree ill-humored, so much so as to be almost ridiculous. A few polite expressions from Captain Uno, addressed to Emmy, were sufficient to make her unapproachable for some hours, and were frequently the cause of the cross words which were continually exchanged between herself and her brother William.

The Welters were one of those families in which each member instinctively co-operates in keeping up an appearance of peace and unity, although such unity does not always exist. Yet even the appearance of unity is valuable, when it does not degenerate into sheer hypocrisy ; and in their case it did not go so far as this. They had sufficient mutual affection to help and stand by each other when necessary, but not sufficient to silence the sharp tormenting words which the goddess of discord sows in the heart.

Above all there was a sort of *guerre sourde* existing between Mina and William which seldom came to an actual outbreak, but of which cutting words and teasing remarks were the flashes of lightning which announced the impending storm. It seemed to be a contention which had grown up with them from childhood and had increased with time ; and although Emmy was convinced that the chief fault lay with Mina, she took part against William in their constant sparring, and felt justified to some extent in doing so, owing to the small good-will she felt for this pseudo-brother. Indisputably, there exists a feeling of antipathy which sometimes gets the mastery over us, strongly and inexplicably and without our being able to state any reasonable ground for it, and which one can hardly get rid of without the greatest difficulty. If love can spring up at first sight (and I am convinced that it can), so the feeling of antipathy is not less instantaneous in its influence.

Thus it was in Emmy's case with William de Graaff. Could it have been an unconscious reflection of the old enmity which existed between Otto and William in the days of their childhood ? or was it his ill-favored exterior ? Emmy asked herself this question often enough without arriving at its solution. She was not unfrequently ashamed of this feeling, considering all the attention and courtesy which

from the first day of their acquaintance he had shown her.

She often compelled herself to say a friendly word or do a sisterly act by which, however, she did violence to the natural feelings of her heart.

But, take it altogether, Emmy was thus far little affected by the small disagreeables which I have mentioned.

In respect of her relations with Mrs. Welters she was bitterly disappointed; at least the expectations which her warm young heart had formed had not been realized. With the good qualities which she undoubtedly possessed, Mrs. Welters was a hard, cold woman. A loving, hearty word was beyond the limits of her nature, and accordingly in her whole being there was more that repelled than attracted. And yet one could not but admire the manner in which she acquitted herself of the not easy task of presiding at the head of a family composed of such different elements.

If the people did not love her, they respected her, and few had the courage to thwart her.

She had a tolerably even temper, and moreover she pursued her path of life with the pleasant conviction that all she did was well done, that one might seek in vain for a cleverer, neater housewife, and a better administered household. In this she was not altogether wrong, but it would doubtless have been more agreeable if she had not been so entirely penetrated with this truth, or if she could have added to all those virtues, feminine gentleness and amiability.

Neither of her words nor deeds could Emmy with reason complain, and indeed she did not do so; but in her heart she felt a void, which previously had been quite filled with the love of her aunt. To her she could express every thought, every emotion of her heart. In the feeling that she made her aunt's life agreeable, that she

was useful and necessary to her happiness, there was something satisfying which was now wanting.

Here Emmy had become a member of the family among many others; without her they had lived contentedly, and her coming had in no respect made the smallest alteration. Her father was friendly and hearty towards her, but not more so than to all the others; her step-mother was cold but polite, as to a stranger.

That all this gave Emmy a dissatisfied feeling was the natural consequence of her being brought up separately; she had been spoilt, not in the sense usually attached to the word, but in respect of a love and care which she had formerly received and considered as a natural thing, and which she now missed all too much.

But before Emmy had been many weeks in her father's house, one thought had become uppermost in her heart, which made all these things mere trifles.

What this was I will presently tell.

CHAPTER VI.

PREPARATIONS FOR A GREAT EVENT IN DILBURG.

WHAT could it be, you ask, which a few months later threw the young generation of Dilburg into such a state of excitement?

Why did the shops exhibit tulle and tarlatan—such as one hardly sees except during the time of the winter season at the Casino?

Well, all these preparations were for a ball—“*the ball*,” as it was called, to be given by Mr. Eversberg as a “house-warming” of his new residence.

It was certainly a strange time of year for dancing—September! The invitations fell like bombshells into the houses of those who were asked to the ball, for the Eversbergs let no one into their plans till the cards made their appearance. Those who were not asked declared it was quite ridiculous.

"If my daughters were asked," said the surgeon's wife, "I could not consent to their going. This is the time for enjoying the fine weather, and not for dancing in hot rooms."

But, for once, Bruno was possessed with the idea that his birth-day, which fell in this month, should be celebrated by a splendid *fête*, and it seemed to him that for all the guests, himself included, nothing would be half so pleasant as a ball. And so the ball was resolved upon, for what Bruno had once proposed, he generally knew how to carry into execution. "Who knows when I shall be again at home on my birth-day?"

These words had overcome the last objections of Mr. Eversberg, and ten days beforehand invitations were actually sent round.

To no house did they come in such abundance as to that of Burgomaster Welters; each member of the family received one. Mina was the first to remark that it was unbecoming for one family to go there in such numbers.

"Well, so I think," said her brother William; "then you must begin by staying at home." Emmy and Elizabeth could not help laughing at William's answer, which was sufficient to destroy Mina's good humor for the whole day. Her opinions she now explained in a sharper tone. Elizabeth was a child, and the idea of letting her go to a ball before she was out, was in the highest degree irregular.

"It is a pity, Mina, that you can't transfer a few years to Elizabeth; you would both benefit by it," answered William.

Mina now became still more disagreeable, and when Emmy took Elizabeth's part, she turned to her with the words—

"Of course *you* do not think of going. It is not at all the thing to dance in mourning."

It was fortunate that the entrance of Mrs. Welters broke off any further dispute, and still more that all Mina's objections fell to

the ground by her mother's announcement that "papa and she" saw no reason why they should not all go. For, clever as Mina might be, experience had sufficiently taught her that in order to avoid useless struggles she must strike her flag to the decisions of her mother, whenever they were once expressed.

It is difficult to describe Elizabeth's excitement at the prospect of her first ball; she could speak of nothing else; she could think of nothing else. She hummed dance-tunes all the day long, and danced the most fantastic steps whenever she could find a leisure moment.

The week which preceded the ball was a very busy one for the ladies of the Welters' family.

Papa Welters, who, with the prospect of the supper which was to follow the ball, was looking forward to the *fête* no less than the young people, immediately gave to each of his girls a present of money, in order that the credit of the family might be maintained in the form of ball-dresses. During this week, therefore, they all had their hands full of business, for Mrs. Welters especially prided herself on the fact that, in her house, nothing was "put out"—a technical expression connected with needlework.

But although nothing was "put out," it was not against the statutes for a needlewoman who had a certain celebrity in Dilburg, under the name of "Crooked Coozey," to come into the house; and all that week the said Coozey swayed her sceptre of scissors uninterruptedly in the dining-room, where Mrs. Welters and the young ladies made their ball-dresses under her directions.

The result was that the gentlemen found the drawing-room less sociable than usual, and Otto revenged himself by saucy remarks about the axis of tulle and tarlatan round which the world seemed to be revolving; and after much fun with Elizabeth, who was

quite ready to catch the ball he threw, and toss it back again, he generally took refuge with Mary van Stein, who was also invited, but who would not even speak of the invitation before her father, still less avail herself of it.

Meanwhile, during the last two months, Otto had become much better acquainted with the inhabitants of Beckley. The inheritance, which appeared to be no idle fancy, had, however, to be substantiated by documents, the investigation of which was attended with much difficulty, and was the principal cause of his repeated visits. In fact, there was a great-grandfather to be found, or, to speak more accurately, his baptismal and burial register; and it was just this particular old man whom it was impossible to dispense with in the ladder of ancestors up which Mr. Arnold was to climb to Martin van Rossom. Hitherto Otto had not been discouraged by his want of success, and the more he became acquainted with the inhabitants of Beckley, the more he began to find that his feeling of friendship for them gave a spur to his zeal. Not a week after his first visit, he called one evening at Beckley to give a cursory account of what he had made out in connection with the examination of the papers.

He found the father and daughter sitting in one of the down-stairs rooms opening on to the terrace, and they received him as an old friend and a welcome guest.

Celine was sitting at the tea-table, whilst the Javanese maid, standing behind her chair, carried backwards and forwards the kettle of boiling water, and in this, the first feminine occupation in which Otto had seen Celine engaged, she seemed to him, if possible, prettier than the first time he met her. After the object of Otto's visit, the inheritance, had been disposed of, Mr. Arnold again talked much about Java and his favorite topic, and Celine also joined with animation in the conversation. Otto was

surprised at the knowledge of affairs with which she spoke, and that with simplicity, as if she were entirely unaware that such matters seldom came within the range of thought of a young lady of her age. She did not laugh so much as at Otto's first visit; on the contrary, there was a shade of melancholy on her countenance which lent to it another, if not a greater charm.

It was only as twilight came on that Otto recollects that he ought to depart, unless he wished to be at Mary's house later than usual; but just then Celine said—

"I am going to play to my father, Mr. Welters; would you like to stay and listen to some music?"

Was it more of courtesy than pleasure or curiosity which made him sit down again?

Otto Welters was a great lover of music, and Dilburg afforded ample encouragement to that fine art.

In the first place, it had its section of the Tonkunst Society, where all the young Dilburgers, whether they had voices or no, prepared themselves by weekly practisings for the great performance which took place every alternate year. Every winter brought its ladies' concert once a fortnight, when now and then a musical star passing through Holland, was as well received as in the larger towns of our country. Then, in summer, the "open air" concerts might truly be called the favorite diversion of the Dilburgers, and on a Sunday evening, assembled in the somewhat confined space of the public garden, they listened to the band of the regiment that played for the amusement of the *elite* of the town. Otto was a zealous member of all these musical institutions; he was gifted with a musical ear and good taste, and although he had never had the time to become himself a performer, he was too passionate a lover of good music not to seek it wherever it was to be found.

His musical requirements found little to satisfy them at home. Mina did not

play ; she always spoke of an illness in which she had lost her voice, a voice the charms of which were left to the imagination ; and Emmy and Elizabeth, when they were asked to play, and said that they played "a little," it was indeed "a little" in a very literal sense of the word. Elizabeth especially had no great talent, and therefore, even with her really considerable diligence, some excuse might be made for her. Emmy had more talent, but less patience ; and so, as the world requires that every young lady should play "a little" they formed together a pair of these musical bunglers whose name is legion.

Probably, then, when Celine sat down without hesitation to the piano, Otto expected to hear one of the popular pieces which at that time were the order of the day, and which he too often heard played at home when music was proposed.

Whilst he gazed in the twilight at the uncertain outline of Celine's figure, he waited in an indifferent frame of mind ; but this indifference gave way at the very first chords to the greatest interest, and before Celine had played for a quarter of an hour, he listened with bated breath. Such playing Otto had never heard ; he had heard others play with as much skill, but her playing was something extraordinary, so striking that his feelings were moved to the very depths of his soul. It was evidently an improvisation ; first a simple melody which passed slowly from an *andante* to a quicker movement, then it burst out into a wild, passionate strain, and at last dissolved itself into a soft melancholy harmony, and unexpectedly her playing became a gentle accompaniment, reminding one of the tones of a harp, as she sang with a deep contralto voice—

Aus fernen Ufern hingebannt,
Thut's mir von Herzen weh,
Dass ich mein liebes Vaterland
Nicht mehr vor Augen seh !
Ich sehne immer mich zurück,

Dass lässt mir keine Ruh ;
Ich werfe manchen nassen Blick
Der fernen Heimath zu,
Von dir verbannt, mein Vaterland !

For more than half an hour Celine remained at the piano ; it had become quite dark before she had finished playing. At the last chord Mr. Arnold rang for lights, but before Otto came to his senses or had time to say a word to her, she got up from the piano, went out at the open door into the terrace, and vanished in the darkness.

"Your daughter is a great musician," said Otto at last to Mr. Arnold.

"Yes, Celine plays well, and has a good voice ; I have always taken much trouble to develop this talent in her, and in the last two years of my stay in the East I had the opportunity of providing good instruction for her. She sang almost before she could speak. Music is her nature ; it is her only inheritance from her mother."

"Has your wife been dead long, Mr. Arnold?"

"She did not live to see the first anniversary of Celine's birth. It were much to be desired for my daughter that she had not been brought up without a mother, but I had too great a love for her mother to supply her place. She was a simple girl from the interior, the daughter of a native magnate, darker in tint but still more beautiful than Celine, equally clever but less developed, but she was only in her sixteenth year when I buried her, and with her the best sentiments of my heart, and the happiness of my life."

"I fear that I have involuntarily touched on a painful theme, Mr. Arnold, but forgive me."

"On the contrary, I call to mind the departed willingly. Celine and I often talk to each other of the mother whom she never knew, but whose image I have caused to live in her thoughts. Seventeen years is long enough to heal a wound, and in my daughter I have found a compensa-

tion for which I am thankful to God every day."

After these last words of Mr. Arnold a long silence ensued. Otto hoped every moment that Celine would come in again, and he would not go till he had thanked her for her playing and singing, and all the more because he regarded her invitation to him to stay and listen as a compensation for her declining to sing at his first visit. But still no Celine came, and in order to start a new subject of conversation, Otto broke the silence by the question—

"Do you know, Mr. Arnold, that you have taken away from us Dilburgers a privilege which from long usage was regarded as a right?"

"Surely I know that, my worthy sir," answered Mr. Arnold, with his sarcastic smile, "and if I had not known it, people have taken good care to make me know it. But you must not take it amiss if I say, as an Englishman says, "My house is my castle," and that I hold myself entitled to maintain absolute freedom for myself in my own castle. Celine is in the habit of wandering out of doors at all times of the day. Neither my health nor my time permit me to accompany her. I am almost certain, for example, that at this moment she is walking about somewhere in the wood. I have remarked by her playing that she is in a melancholy mood, and then solitude is the best cure for her. How then could I consent that Beckley should be open to the public?"

"At this moment—in this darkness, and in the wood!" exclaimed Otto, in surprise.

"Why not, Mr. Welters? Does it appear to you unfit? I suppose you think that a young lady cannot with impunity be brought up entirely out of society. Celine has too little knowledge of the world to be aware that timidity and shyness are expected from a young lady, and she is too natural to feign a feeling which she does not possess. There is no danger,

and if there were, Celine has plenty of courage, and would know how to defend herself; of that I am quite sure."

There was a certain pride in the way Mr. Arnold spoke of Celine. Otto had remarked this already, and he could forgive the father who felt pride in such a beautiful gifted daughter.

But now Otto took his leave, since he could not expect her to come back. As he was going away and had reached the end of the terrace, Celine with her faithful Cæsar emerged from the shade of a dark path and stood before him.

"I was just thinking of you, Mr. Welters," she said, coming towards him: "guess what I was thinking of?"

"That you had given me no opportunity of thanking you for the pleasure I have had in your singing and playing," said Otto, heartily.

Celine laughed; it was too dark to distinguish her countenance; but he saw her white teeth shine and her eyes glisten in the darkness.

"No, I certainly did not think of that, Mr. Welters. I could not help its not being more cheerful. All day I have gone about with stupid sorrowful thoughts; but they have been driven away by my playing, and now it is all right again." She interrupted herself—"Now I must just tell you what I was thinking of, only you must not laugh at me."

"Surely not, Miss Celine."

"I want to know what your Christian name is which begins with an O. I can only think of two, Oscar and Oswald."

"Have you never heard of Otto?"

"Otto; well, that is a pretty name, Mr. Welters. I think I shall call you Otto in future. May I?"

"By all means," said Otto.

"Yes, but you must call me Celine, or I shall not dare to call you Otto."

"Good evening, Celine," said Otto.

"Good evening, Otto." This last was

accompanied with a clear laugh, and the next moment she had vanished into the wood by a side-path.

During the whole way home Otto could not help thinking of Celine; there was something unaccountably charming in her which quite carried him away. The contrast between her mental developments and her childlike *näiveté* attracted him irresistibly. He thought how entirely different she was from all the other young ladies he had hitherto met. He thought of the deep passionate feeling which had betrayed itself in her playing; and of the dark eyes which flashed like two stars in the dusky evening.

He was startled out of his meditations by the striking of the clock over the town gate, which meanwhile he had approached.

It was with a feeling of annoyance and surprise that he counted ten. Quickenning his steps he was soon in the well-known street.

But the light in the passage of Uncle Van Stein's house was already out, and Otto knew that to ring would involve Mary in more unpleasantness.

"I hope she has not been waiting for me, the dear child," he said, again looking up at the dark house. He then turned back and walked slowly and sunk in thought to his chambers.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BALL.

THE day of the ball at last dawned—I say at last, to express Elizabeth's thoughts; for in her young mind the *fête* to which she looked forward with so much impatience was the limit of her estimate of time, and the whole of the preceding week seemed to her interminable.

She literally danced round her ball dress when it was completed, and during the two days which intervened before it could

be put on she could never pass the bedroom door without turning in, putting her head into the wardrobe, and feasting her eyes on the garment as it lay there in all its whiteness and grace.

She told Emmy in confidence, that she thought it quite a pity that no aunt of hers had just died; for Emmy, being still in mourning, was to appear entirely in white, whilst Elizabeth had to submit to rose-colored ribbons and a pale red rose in her dark hair, which Mrs. Welters had chosen.

As to that hair of Elizabeth's, a very important matter had a short time since occurred in the family. Only two months ago her long thick plaits had been one of her greatest attractions, but when Emmy appeared at Dilburg with her short crop of curly hair, which she did not know how else to manage, Elizabeth thought that no prettier coiffure could be devised in the whole world of fashion, and without asking any one's advice, she one evening applied the scissors to her beautiful plaits, so that on the following morning she appeared at breakfast like a shorn sheep.

Like a shorn sheep, I say, because neither art nor patience could force the slightest resemblance to a curl into her luxuriant but straight hair.

At this discovery the young lady was somewhat discomposed, looking at the hair she had cut off, whilst she listened to the not altogether undeserved lecture of her mother. But hardly half an hour later, with her imperturbable good humor, she sat down to laugh at her own folly.

"Suppose I try and fasten it on with glue, Emmy; suppose I were to offer my hair to Mina as a birthday present?"

"But she already has some in a little box, and it grows on her head on Sundays and *fête* days." With all her jokes, however, Elizabeth felt great annoyance at her short hair, and the evening before the ball a long conference took place between her

r hair-dresser—the hair-dresser of—who, with the help of a myste-
instrument and hot coals, contrived to
ff curls in Elizabeth's hair, at least
one evening of the ball.

s her head, with at least forty curl
hanging to it, which just peeped
imy's room, her eyes beaming with
when the great operation of dressing
un.

"It will be all right after all, Emmy." Such were the important words which Elizabeth had felt it necessary to utter, and for which she had left her own room. Before Emmy could answer her she had whisked away.

Emmy laughed at Elizabeth's childish excitement, as indeed every member of the family had done during the week ; but in Emmy's heart there was a joyful emotion in expectation of the *fête* of the evening. It was her first ball also ; and any one who has not forgotten what that word means, any one who has experienced what it expresses—more especially when that word is in connection with meeting some one who is preferred to the whole world—can comprehend why Emmy's eyes sparkled, why her heart beat so gayly, whilst she was dressing for her first ball.

For it was true, that the Dilburgers began to whisper to each other—what Mina divined, when she so frequently of late chose as the subject of her conversation the unhappy life of a naval officer's wife ; it was true, although it lived as yet unuttered in both hearts, unacknowledged by Emmy even to herself ; it was nevertheless true that Bruno and Emmy loved each other.

It had come to pass as it might have been foreseen it would do—as it must do. The feeling implanted in childhood had now taken new root in their young, warm, and more impressionable hearts, and had grown with daily increasing strength into that ever wonderful tree which blooms but

once in every human life ; once dazzles the eye with its splendor, and blooming or withered makes its ennobling influence felt through life till its last day.

"When I look at you and Elizabeth, I think of a white and a red rose, Emmy," said Otto, looking with satisfaction at the sisters in their white tulle ball-dresses, when they were all assembled in the sitting-room dressed for the ball.

The two roses blushed with pleasure ; but before Otto had caught sight of the cloud on Mina's face and could make good his mistake, William, with his usual desire to plague Mina, made the matter much worse by saying :

"Two roses and one sunflower."

Mina had not had time to return a sharp answer, when Otto added, passing over William's remark as if he had not spoken, "And Mina also looks very nice."

Whether Otto really thought so, we will not inquire too closely.

Her dress of yellow gauze with purple stripes, and the wreath of red flowers in her hair, alas ! could not make poor Mina prettier than she was ; they could not make her arms and neck whiter or rounder, they could not efface the fretful expression which disfigured her countenance.

For an instant, however, her countenance cleared up, when a beautiful bouquet was brought in.

She went a step forward to receive it—a refreshing thought flashed through her mind of Captain Uno's gallantry ; but had an asp been concealed under the flowers, she could not have pushed it away from her with greater disgust than she did the next moment.

The quasi asp, however, was nothing but an innocent card with the address of Emmy Welters upon it.

This made a slight bustle ; Elizabeth was as much excited by the arrival of the bouquet as if it had been for herself, and she rushed up-stairs to fetch Emmy a cast-

off bouquet-holder of Mina's which she possessed.

Whilst these and other little incidents were taking place in the houses of their respective guests, Mrs. Eversberg and Bruno were already sitting quite prepared for the arrival of their company. The mother and son were together in the reception-room. The former had assured herself by a last look round that all was in order in the different rooms; and now, with her own quiet dignity, she sat on the sofa, under the great mirror, whilst Bruno, *en grande tenue*, paced up and down before her.

All at once, Bruno stopped and gazed attentively at his mother.

"I wish, mamma, I could learn from you some time or other how it is you manage to keep so young and handsome."

Mrs. Eversberg looked up at her son with a smile. "Do you know what the best way is, my dear boy? A happy life, such as your father has provided for me, and the possession of a son who, with his prejudiced eyes, looks upon his old mother as extra handsome."

She laughed, and Bruno would have said something in answer, when the master of the house appeared at the door. Bruno was right: his mother was an extremely handsome woman for her age, and at the first glance you would have said she was the daughter of her husband, who now entered; yet there was but a few years' difference in age between them. The circumstance that, although but fifty years old, his hair was already snow-white, contributed to this; for, if one looked at him more closely, one saw plainly that his features were far from suiting his white hair.

This is our first acquaintance with Mr. Eversberg, and I will detain you a moment to describe his exterior, for it can hardly be called an every-day exterior. I do not believe that any one who had once seen

him could ever forget his countenance; there was something so peculiar in the pallid tint of his complexion, so strange in the fixed look in his eyes, in the cold sound and calm tone of his voice whilst he slowly pronounced each word, as if he had first carefully thought it over before it came out of his lips.

But with the external calmness which distinguished him, there was, in contradiction to it, a certain nervousness with which he clasped his hands and folded them when he addressed any one—a nervousness which at the smallest rustle made him start up and look suddenly over his shoulder, as if he thought somebody was standing behind him.

Taken as a whole, his exterior was not agreeable; but in Dilburg, people had known Mr. Eversberg so many years, that they did not pay much attention to it, and they overlooked that exterior in his eminent qualities of justice and generosity, which they honored and loved.

This veneration and love were felt for him even in a still greater measure by his wife and son. A happier and more united family than the Eversbergs one might have sought for in vain in Dilburg.

It was remarkable how the set countenance of Mr. Eversberg altered in expression whenever he was with his family. And now, as he entered the well-lighted saloon, a friendly expression came over his face, and Bruno thus greeted him—

"We were so afraid you would not come in time, father."

"Bruno and I had quite settled that you should just cast your eye over everything," were the words with which Mrs. Eversberg greeted her husband.

"It has been in too good hands to make me feel the slightest doubt that all is in order, my dear Johanna," answered Mr. Eversberg, while he prepared to sit down by his wife.

"No, no, father, you must not think of

resting ; you must first look once all round—must he not, mamma, if it is only to see the chandelier in the great drawing-room, and the collection of shrubs in the corner, where I have hidden the musicians?"

Mr. Eversberg willingly allowed himself to be led round by his wife and son. He allowed them to show him all the arrangements for the ball, which were as new to him as they would be to the guests, for his time was too much taken up at the foundry for him to trouble himself about such domestic matters.

Besides a great room on the opposite side of the house where the table was laid for supper, there were on this side three rooms, leading into each other, prepared for the ball.

The new house, which the family already occupied, was all newly furnished in a modern style, and was now lighted up for the first time with gas chandeliers ; all ornament and taste, richness without being overloaded, elegance which did not exclude comfort ; so that Bruno, with his preference for what was old, could not help looking at everything with pleasure.

The reception-room, especially, with its dark furniture, its light yellow silk chairs and heavy yellow silk curtains and portières, had a splendid effect. From the smaller room one went through a folding-door into the dining-room, which was now arranged as a ball-room with a waxed floor, and this again opened into what was called the green drawing-room, where golden stars on green velvet curtains glittered in the radiance of the gaslight, and where the card-tables were awaiting the non-dancing guests. Behind the drawn curtains all the windows were set open to let in the cool air of the autumn evening, and opening out of the saloon there was a boudoir from whence those who wished for more fresh air could step out on to a balcony which was concealed behind the curtain.

But what added more than anything to the splendor of the effect, was the profusion of flowers which concealed the corners of the room, and rendered the musicians invisible. The master of the house could hardly have failed to observe all these things with pleasure and a certain pride—a pride more excusable in him than in those who are born and who have grown up in an atmosphere of wealth. But whatever he might have felt, his sensations could not be gathered from the expression of his countenance. He went silently up and down the rooms, and whenever he came back to his wife and son he spoke an affectionate word and praised this or that arrangement.

But just before the arrival of the guests, he stopped suddenly in the furthest drawing-room and drew aside one of the green damask curtains which shut out the faintly glimmering daylight from the window where he stood, and gazed with the fixed look which was peculiar to him at what was outside. His gaze was in the direction of the foundry, the lights of which shone out towards him in the twilight gloom. Slowly, as with a mechanical motion in which his thoughts had no part, he let the curtain drop out of his hand and turned round.

Before him lay the splendid rooms in a sea of light. He saw his wife and son standing together in the farthest room. Mrs. Eversberg, with her hand on Bruno's shoulder, was speaking to him with the peculiar smile which gave such a charm to her countenance.

From where he stood he could hear Bruno's clear laugh resounding through the rooms. Motionless he gazed at the group just as he had gazed out of the window ; but all at once his rigid face became contracted and assumed an expression of wild despair, such as one would have thought impossible in a face generally so calm. A shiver passed through his limbs,

and whilst he covered his face with his hands a deep sigh arose from his breast, with the words, "O God! O God!"

Hardly two minutes later he stood by his wife prepared to receive the first guests, whose approach was announced by the sound of carriages. His pale face was now calm and rigid as ever; no one could have remarked anything unusual in it.

An hour afterwards the ball was in full swing.

Of the ball, or at all events of the first part of it, there is not much to be told. It was like all entertainments of this nature.

Lovely young faces seemed lovelier and prettier with the glow of pleasure and the blush of enjoyment, and whirled round and round, in their brilliant ball-dresses, with as much spirit as if dancing were the object of life. Dancers with fewer external advantages also danced now and then, and in the intervals found time to rest, as they called it. Those still less gifted, the poor wall-flowers, sat gazing at their blank engagement-cards, trying "to look" as if they did not mind, and as if they had dressed with so much care, and had come there only to look on at the dancing of their more fortunate sisters.

Mammas sat together looking on with pleasure at their broods, and papas vanished into the already mentioned green drawing-room, where, at most of the card-tables, parties were made up.

The ball was very animated, as the partners told each other. The reproach of laziness, which on such occasions sometimes falls on the gentlemen, could not at any rate be applied to the young Dilburgers.

Amongst the few gentlemen who did not either dance or play at cards was Otto Welters. Mary had urged him to take advantage of the entertainment from which, owing to her father's illness, she was precluded, and he had consented to do so,

but he had not brought a cheerful face with him to the ball, and he refrained altogether from dancing, although formerly so fond of it.

Yet Otto seemed to regard the dancing couples with interest, and now and then, as Emmy or Elizabeth swept by him with their merry faces, his countenance brightened up for a moment. Both these young ladies were among the most in request as partners, and they were obliged more than once to split their dances in order to content all the "aspirants." Mina also danced a great deal. None of the gentlemen present forgot their duty to the eldest daughter of a house where they had been treated with so much courtesy, and had been so kindly received.

Captain Uno, who in this respect was anything but remiss, was, to Mina's great satisfaction, booked three times on her engagement-card. Yes, and after each dance walked up and down with her for a long time, and this evening with a vivacity which heightened more than ever the fond expectations of her heart. After the first dance, he told her of the unmistakable deterioration in mankind clearly evident in the buttons of the uniforms of his subalterns, and which, but for his strict discipline, would become less and less bright. After the second dance, he told her of a new model sabre which, regarded as an improvement on the old one, was as a steamer to a canal barge. After the third dance, Mina obtained a lesson on stars; not in the way of astronomy, but in the knowledge of the distinguishing marks which, since the abolition of epaulettes, made it difficult to distinguish a general from a corporal.

Mina quite expanded under the influence of Captain Uno's entertaining conversation. She had not looked so well nor so good-humored for a long time. When Captain Uno, in the course of conversation, spoke of a possible change in the garrison, and asked her opinion as to his probable

destination, Mina regarded it as an unkind freak of fortune that just at that moment the signal for the next dance was given, and they were separated; but after supper she was again to dance with him, and who knows whether the conversation might not take the expected turn.

Among all the happy couples there were none so happy as Bruno and Emmy. I need hardly say that they danced together as often as they dared without giving offence to others.

Already some hours had passed since the ball began; the temperature of the ball-room, although as much air as possible was admitted, could not be lowered to the desired degree of coolness, and many couples withdrew for a few minutes into the boudoir where they could breathe the fresh air in the balcony.

In the middle of a dance Bruno had led Emmy there; he first carefully wrapt round her a cloak which lay ready at the entrance, and then stepped with her outside.

There was an indescribable stillness and calm in that cool autumn evening, which was the more remarkable when contrasted with the stirring, lively ball-room which they had just left. The distant music and the tread of the dancers' feet were the only sounds which reached their ears. The moon was hidden behind a cloud, but the sky was for the most part clear, and the stars sparkled fitfully. The garden below them was veiled in a mysterious half darkness, as was the balcony on which Bruno and Emmy stood.

For the first moment neither of them spoke. In the ball-room, in the midst of the dancing, they had had plenty to say to each other; but here, in the calm stillness, the tongues of both were paralyzed. Emmy was the first to break silence.

"I believe, Bruno, that this is the pleasantest day of my life."

"Is it, Emmy? I am so glad that you say so. To me it is not only the pleasant-

est, but also the happiest—at least it may be so," he added, gently, and with some hesitation. "When I must again go from home, this day, of all others, will remain in my recollection."

"Must you then go away soon, Bruno?" A shade passed over Emmy's sweet face as she said these words, in a trembling tone.

It gave Bruno courage to say now what he had intended to say that evening. "I can stay, at all events, till the end of my leave, Emmy, and there might be circumstances under which I should not go away at all. Emmy, may I at once say what those might be? May I at last express the wish of my heart?"

Emmy made no answer, but she had not drawn back her hand which Bruno held, and so he went on in a tone which betrayed the deepest emotion—

"You know, Emmy, that I chose the profession of a naval officer against the will of my parents; but my decision was not made out of mere wilfulness, but from a conviction that I was not suited to the life of the counting-house and foundry, to which my father had destined me; and till a short time since I never repented it. The busy, active life, full of variety, the incessant change of place and scene, seemed made for me and my impatient nature. But, in my long voyage home, a doubt began to arise in my mind whether in the long run I should feel happy in this changeable life which my profession brings with it. You may be sure that it was partly the longing for home and for my parents which influenced me, but there was something more—the recollection of that little fair-haired girl, whom I was already in love with as a boy, and whose image began to stand before my eyes as I came nearer my country. I pictured to myself how I should find her on my return; whether she would correspond to all she promised to be when she was a child, with her good dear heart and her soft blue eyes."

"I thought of this every day afresh, Emmy, and every day my longing was stronger ; my thoughts gradually became bolder, and almost unknown to myself I went so far as to imagine that this girl might some day give me her love, as I loved her memory. I said to myself that to her I would sacrifice my profession—that for her sake I would even yet fulfil the wish of my father, and by her side would learn to live the life of a quiet citizen. All this I thought over so long that I was gradually entirely absorbed with these castles in the air ; and, when at last I came home, the day arrived when all at once the girl of my dreams stood before me. Emmy, at that moment, when I saw her unexpectedly before me, more beautiful than the most beautiful ideal that I had formed of her ; when she uttered my name with the old well-known sound of her voice ; when she looked at me with her old friendly eyes, then, in her presence, I felt like a shy boy, who could find no words even for the simplest welcome, and who has since blamed himself a thousand times for the stupid manner in which he behaved towards her, whom in his thoughts he knew so well."

Bruno stopped speaking for a moment ; his tone had gradually become more impassioned. Emmy had partly turned away her face, but he felt her hand tremble within his own, and with a voice of deep emotion he went on—

"Emmy, must I speak still more clearly ? You now know that it depends on you whether I stay here or go away again. If I am mistaken, and you do not love me enough to become my wife, then I must go away, and the sooner the better. Now, you can yourself answer the question you put to me. May I stay, Emmy ?"

Emmy turned her face towards Bruno, and at the same moment the moon appeared from behind a cloud which had long obscured it. It lighted up her face, which was full of emotion ; her blue eyes

glistened with tears ; but a smile played on the lips which were parted to make her reply.

But what she was about to say remained unsaid. Before she could speak, hasty steps approached the balcony, and Bruno had just time to release Emmy's hand, when the portiere was suddenly raised and a servant came up to him.

Bruno unwillingly turned towards him, but a glance at the troubled face of the old domestic silenced the impatient words which rose to his lips.

"Mr. Bruno, please to come immediately to the blue room ; master wishes to speak to you."

"Is it anything particular, John ?"

The old man made no answer.

"You should come directly, Mr. Bruno," he repeated.

Bruno no longer tarried. With a smile on his lips he offered Emmy his arm to conduct her back to the ball-room.

"One might almost predict from that grave-digger look of John's, that the sky was about to fall upon us," said he softly to her. "Probably this important affair is connected with the supper."

In going from the balcony into the boudoir, they stumbled upon William de Graaff who, with his arms folded, and with a sombre expression on his face, was standing by the portiere.

"I have been looking for you everywhere, Emmy," he said, in a cold tone, which struck her as disagreeable. "The dance you promised me is half over ; but how could I know that you were gone off with Eversberg to look for the moonlight ?"

There was a biting sarcasm in the tone of his words, which brought a deep blush into Emmy's cheek.

"We were not so much in search of moonlight as of freshair," answered Bruno ; "but, as Emmy has promised you this dance, I have no further right to her."

He bowed to her as he left the boudoir

by a door which led into the passage, and Emmy took William's arm, and going back into the ball-room, stood up with him amongst the dancers.

But, as long as the dance lasted, William did not speak a word to her, and Emmy was also silent. The dance, the ball-room, the lights, the company, all appeared to her as a dream ; all her movements were mechanical ; she danced because dance she must, without knowing to what tune her feet were moving. She saw without looking ; she heard without listening. In her heart, however, there sounded delightful music, which drowned all other sounds —the words which Bruno had just spoken to her. What did it matter to her that they were interrupted ? She knew that Bruno loved her. What mattered it to her that no words had passed her lips ? She knew that her heart had answered with a thousand voices before Bruno had spoken. The sensation of happiness within her brought a smile to her lips ; she gave no heed to the dark, passionate look with which William's eyes were fixed upon her ; she did not notice his silence ; she hardly remarked that the dance was over. She could not recollect how she came to be alone in the solitary corner, almost concealed behind the tall green plants. But there she sat alone, with all the happy thoughts which whirled through her pretty little head.

This dance was the last before the interval which was to be occupied by supper, in expectation of which the couples were walking up and down the ball-room. The papas who had been playing at cards now re-appeared and attached themselves to the mammas, who, during the last dance, had almost threatened to swallow each other up in their increasing tendency to yawn. But the approach of supper, and the move preparatory to it, now infused fresh animation among them all.

Emmy, in her quiet corner, gradually

came to herself ; and, indeed, when Elizabeth discovered her there, she was quite in a state to speak reasonably.

Elizabeth had hardly words enough in her otherwise rich vocabulary to express the transcendent heights of her bliss. In her exaggerated way she told Emmy, all in one breath, long and confused stories about lieutenants, "exquisitely beautiful dancers, who had said such charming things to her." At least they seemed confused to Emmy ; but it might have been the state of her own mind which made Elizabeth's stories appear disjointed.

Her attention, however, was still more drawn away from Elizabeth's chatter, for just then she saw Bruno enter the room.

It seemed to her that he was paler than before, but perhaps she only imagined this. She saw, however, with some surprise, that he walked straight up to his mother, who was conversing in the midst of a circle of ladies and gentlemen.

From the other end of the room it was impossible for Emmy to hear what he said, but she saw that he bent over Mrs. Eversberg and apparently said a few half-whispered words to her.

Bruno's mother, smiling to him, gave him some answer, and the circle opened to let them pass ; she then took her son's arm and he conducted her down the whole length of the ball-room. Here and there she was addressed and detained, and Emmy saw how Bruno then stopped and repeatedly pushed back his hair, a nervous habit of his which she well knew.

The nearer he got to the door, the more he hastened his pace ; at last the door closed behind the mother and son.

Emmy drew a deep breath, but the next moment she found herself obliged to speak to a gentleman who addressed her, and who presently took her for a promenade through the room. The music had ceased, and there was a hum of voices in the ball-room, and now and then a merry laugh.

But nearly half an hour passed, and still the company promenaded up and down, and at length, here and there, some of the couples sat down.

Ten minutes more, and the life of the party began to flag ; the laughter ceased, and the conversation dropped to a whisper. What could be going on ? Not only their host was missing from the ball-room, but the hostess and Bruno did not return. What could they mean by leaving the guests to themselves ? Why was not the supper announced ?

Another quarter of an hour passed. Even the whispering stopped ; people looked at each other, and here and there a murmur broke the silence. Burgomaster Welters was heard to say, " If people are invited, it should at least be seen that they have something to eat."

" I heard that there was to be some surprise," said a sarcastic guest, " and perhaps this is it."

" I have never heard that in well-bred society the guests were left to themselves," said Mrs. Welters ; and close to her something was whispered, of which the word " parvenu " was alone distinctly audible.

But the opening of the door stopped every mouth. An unnatural silence reigned in the great ball-room—a silence in which, as the proverb says, one might hear a pin drop—a silence which was audible.

Bruno Eversberg came in.

His deadly-pale face, his bewildered eyes, prepared the company for something unusual.

With tolerably firm steps, with his head slightly bent, he walked into the middle of the ball-room. Here stood a chair which had just done service in a cotillion ; to this he clung with both hands.

Standing under the chandelier, with its full light upon him, he slowly raised his head.

Twice he opened his white trembling lips, but twice in vain ; no sound came forth.

At last Bruno commanded himself. What he said was almost in a whisper, and with a voice without a sound ; the painful stillness around made it nevertheless distinctly audible in the furthest corner of the room. " My friends, a great calamity has fallen upon our house. From some misunderstanding my father has been arrested and taken to prison. It will all, I hope, be cleared up to-morrow morning ; we must, however, be alone. You will excuse my mother that she cannot take leave of you." Bruno had spoken at first in a faltering voice, but the last words he spoke quickly, as if reading them off, without any hesitation in his voice or in his words. As he ceased speaking his eyes wandered through the ball-room as if seeking some one ; but before his guests, half-petrified with surprise, could utter a word of sympathy, Bruno had turned round, and with hasty steps had quitted the room.

The vibration made by the shutting of the great door behind him sounded hollow through the room, and it was the signal for a general break-up of the party.

CHAPTER VIII.

SEVEN AND TWENTY YEARS AGO.

THEY had taken him to prison, the unfortunate Eversberg ; to prison, under a fearful accusation of murder in its most horrible form, committed on a benefactor and friend. Seven and twenty years had passed since that terrible event—seven and twenty years of unblemished life, a life which, besides, bore witness to so many good deeds, to so much honor and uprightness. But all these years had not sufficed to wipe out that black deed, nor to appease the avenging might of retribution. On his highest throne of honor and respect, justice had reached him ; it had snatched off the crown from his guilty head, dragged down his name into the dust, and burnt into his forehead the mark of Cain.

Of this terrible truth nothing was known with certainty the night of the ball ; but after the words uttered by Bruno, it was as if a spectre had walked through the beautiful ball-rooms, grinning at every one, sending a shudder through their limbs, and converting the departure of the guests into a hurried flight. The carriages which were ordered so much later could have been easily procured in the little town of Dilburg, but no one wished to stay a moment longer than was absolutely necessary. They hastily wrapt themselves in their light cloaks.

Silent and amazed, they went out separately. Like shades, the ladies glided along in their light dresses and white cloaks in the clear moonlight of the autumn evening across the great market-place of the town.

Once at home, in every house, the tongues that had been paralyzed by fright were set free, and the conjectures which had been whirling through their heads at last found their natural outlet in speech ; and, now no longer among strangers, people dared to give free utterance to their thoughts.

The word "prison" in connection with the man who had been respected and honored ever since they had known him ; that word in connection with the host who a few hours before had opened his house for a splendid *fête*, was a thought so strange and alarming, that for the moment at least it excluded all ill-natured gossip, all pettiness of mind.

Strange conjectures were uttered that evening in Dilburg, more or less near the truth ; conjectures which in the stillness of night spread themselves through the town, and hardly waited for daylight to proclaim the truth with the loud voice of RUMOR.

But no one could be acquainted with the truth, in all its details, as written during that long night by the unhappy father to his son, and as I shall now impart it to

you by means of the letter itself, which ran thus :—

" Bruno, my good son ! It is to you that I address these lines, which contain the full confession of your unhappy father—a full confession, be it at the cost of the love and reverence of those who are the dearest to me in this world. Yes, I will no longer play the part which has been the curse of my life. This full confession, as I shall lay it before my earthly and heavenly judge, I will in the first place utter to you.

" May God be merciful to me, Bruno ! I cannot feel it otherwise than a relief, now that at last the sword which I have seen for seven and twenty years hanging over my head has fallen. Oh ! that it was myself alone, the guilty one, that it would strike, and that it would pass by the innocent heads of my wife and child. But the curse is, 'The sins of the father are visited on the children to the third and fourth generation ;' that fearful text of Scripture which has often made me shudder, lest it might have its fulfilment even in you—in you, whom I would have defended from shame and pain with my heart's blood. . . .

" But I must remain calm if I am to retain strength enough to say what I must say. I must forget the present for the past, which I must describe to you.

" I write it to you, Bruno, because in these moments I hardly dare to raise my eyes to your mother ; because my guilt towards her is so much greater than towards you. I write it to you in order to spare myself the cruel punishment of a face-to-face confession. You must know the whole truth before I can look into your eyes again, and perhaps in your heart you may still find one word of comfort and forgiveness for him who has expiated so bitterly the crime which he committed.

" I was hardly fifteen years old, Bruno, when my mother, the widow of a shopkeeper, came to live in Dilburg. Our

income was limited, limited even for the small bourgeoisie to which we belonged, but I believe that with good management and a contented disposition it would have been quite sufficient for our wants.

"Far be it from me to wish to stain the memory of my mother; but perhaps I may find some little excuse for myself in the wrong ideas which in many respects were imprinted in me through her example. She was an ambitious woman, my mother, with a discontented disposition, always bewailing the low position to which she had been reduced, and to which, as the daughter of a rich silversmith, who became bankrupt before his death, she was not brought up. It was the recollection of days of wealth and comfort which had embittered her life and made her look upon riches and position as life's highest good.

"I have often thought since, that the seeds of the same restless longings might thus have been sown in me; seeds which in my young and ardent mind, were developed into a passion. I recollect how from a child I indulged in undefined dreams of a future of greatness. I recollect that I looked at the large houses of the rich in the town with envy, and, in my thoughts, I chose out the most beautiful as my dwelling in that undefined time of which my imagination spoke to me; that I pushed into the doors of concert-rooms and theatres to admire the ladies and gentlemen in their smart clothes, and then returned home to our humble dwelling, where I told my mother of all the finery I had seen. 'Oh yes, rich men are happy; they can get everything,' was then her ordinary remark, and our simple meal was distasteful because we thought of the savory dishes which the cook brought over to the great house opposite to us, and my mother was dissatisfied with her new gown because it was not silk, like that of the grocer's wife; and I felt no pleasure in my new clothes, which had been paid for with so much difficulty, be-

cause I have seen finer which other boys whom I knew were wearing. Fools—fools that we were!

"I was seventeen years old when the choice of an avocation for me had to be decided. All my schoolfellow had already left behind them several years of their apprenticeship in the trades they had chosen, but with me it was a new example of the old proverb, 'to overlook what is within one's reach in hankering after what is unattainable.' To become an officer, to study for the profession of an advocate or doctor, these were the foolish dreams of the son of a poor widow, and meanwhile the time and opportunity to become a clever workman were lost. The only good thing was, that I did not suffer to pass by uselessly the period of my being at school, which had been somewhat long for my station in life. That knowledge is power was one of the few sound ideas which I cherished, and which made me zealously acquire the branches of knowledge within my reach.

"Perhaps it was this exceptional zeal which drew on me the attention of the School Commissioners, and made one of them think of recommending me, when the vacancy occurred of a clerkship in the counting-house of the iron foundry of Mr. Muller. I recollect that day as if it were yesterday, when, for the first time in my life contented with my lot, I walked to the foundry and answered in the counting-house the questions which the master put to me. I recollect the proud feeling with which I took my place at the desk which was pointed out to me as mine. I knew that at last I had my foot on the ladder to become more than an ordinary workman, and that I might get on further by my own industry and perseverance; and I did get on further.

"On the eight years of my life which then followed, I cannot look back without satisfaction.

"I worked—I worked with pleasure and zeal through all these long years. I did not keep up any intercourse with my former comrades, nor did I seek new ones ; so that as far as this went there was not much fear of my being led away, and I found ample opportunity for my own studies, which I continued in my leisure hours with an insatiable thirst for knowledge. I do not believe, however, that a mode of life so little natural to a young man can operate favorably in the formation of his character. In my case, at all events, I believe that a little youthful fun and a little youthful folly would have restored the balance of my mind, and have counteracted the sedateness and cold calculation which were its unnatural characteristics.

"Two years after I had entered my employment, my mother died, and I withdrew more and more into myself. In her I lost the only confidant of all my wishes ; the only person in the world to whom I could fully express my thoughts, and from whom I found sympathy for all the ambitious dreams which my fancy presented to me : at this time, also, a great change in my life in other respects took place.

"My master, in these two years, had certainly not exchanged ten words with me. His counting-house was separated by a thin partition from the office of the clerks, and at any hour of the day one might expect to see him come in there.

Except on business, he seldom or never addressed a word to his subordinates, and the distance between the chief and the youngest clerk was too great not to make it a very rare event for me to have a conversation with him on business. He was a singular mixture of good and evil, that old Mr. Muller. He was then nearly seventy years old ; but his back was unbent and he had the strong energetic look of a young man in his dark deep-set eyes. He was strict, but, as I had latterly many opportunities of remarking, more on prin-

ciple than by nature. With an external appearance of calmness, he concealed from the superficial observer his easily agitated mind, which could boil up fiercely in anger or overflow with sorrow, and could passionately and powerfully hate or love.

"And his experience of life had been bitter. The wife, whom in the autumn of his life he had first learnt to know and love, proved faithless to him a few years after their marriage, and left him to follow her lover when the little Joseph had scarcely reached three years of age. People said that on the occurrence of this catastrophe, which had destroyed his domestic happiness, no one ever heard him utter a complaint or saw him shed a tear ; that in the same week he caused everything which had belonged to his wife to be taken out of his house, and that not only her name never came to his lips, but no one would have dared to pronounce it in his presence. It was said, on the contrary, that when this same wife had been forsaken by her lover, and was sunk in poverty, the unknown benefactor, who by an anonymous remittance secured her from further sin, was no one else but her injured husband. Since that time he had lived wholly withdrawn from the world.

"An old single woman, Mrs. Sass, managed his housekeeping and took care of little Joseph. To that young child Mr. Muller appeared to have transferred all the love and tenderness of his heart, and to his welfare and the care of his education thenceforth the whole life of the father appeared to be devoted. He made it his habit always to have the child close by him ; he himself taught him in preparation for school the troublesome elements of knowledge. The child's little bed was placed in his room, and day and night he filled with loving care the place of the child's missing mother. In the foundry the workmen were accustomed to see the little fellow tripping along, holding his father's hand ;

in the counting-house there was nothing strange in finding him near the desk of his father with a box of bricks or a dissected map on a little table.

"The pretty child, with his black curly hair, had now grown up into a smart young man; his desk now stood on the place where he once sat with his playthings, but, alas! the relations between the father and son were far from what they were in those earlier years. I believe that it was the very similarity of their two characters that led to the continual disputes which used to take place when Joseph had outgrown his child's shoes. The leading feature of both their natures was the keeping fast to a resolution once taken, or to an intention once declared; both had a certain coolness which was the cloak of their warm hearts; both had that violence of temper, which had already caused so many feuds between them. I told you, Bruno, how few words had ever been exchanged between my master and me. Twice on New-Year's day he had given me a present of money, with the words, 'I am satisfied with you, Eversberg,' and twice these words had made my heart beat with pride and hope.

"On the occasion of the death of my mother, I remained at home a week and came back to the foundry for the first time a few days after her burial. How I was surprised when I saw my place occupied by a stranger, who informed me that he was appointed the junior clerk, but before I had time to think what this could mean, I was asked by my master into his counting-house.

"When I went in I found Joseph Muller there, sitting at his desk with a pen between his white teeth, without even the pretence of working, staring at his father and me with a defiant look in his dark eyes, which were exactly the same as those of the old man at the desk opposite to him.

"'I have heard with concern that your mother is dead, Eversberg,' said the old man in a more friendly tone than as yet I had ever heard from him. 'It is a great loss for you in which I heartily sympathize. May I know whether you have formed any plan as to your future residence?'

"I told him that I was making arrangements to live with some friends of my mother.

"'Put a stop to these arrangements, Eversberg; I have other plans for you. After to-morrow you are to go to the foundry to learn the business of an iron-founder thoroughly. I have given my orders to the foreman who will inform you down there as to your future employment. I wish you from this time forth to take up your abode in my house, where within a few days, a room shall be made ready for you.'

"In these few words the great change which my lot was to undergo was announced to me. An instant afterwards Mr. Muller left the counting-house. I was too much astonished then to make him any answer, and he did not seem to have expected any. If I had been able and had dared to express what I felt, it would have been a vehement objection to learn an employment which had no attraction for me; nevertheless, I could not but think that my master had my welfare in view, and that unconditional obedience was all that I had to do in order to secure his good-will towards me.

"In the same week I took up my abode in the house of Mr. Muller. I need not have been there long to remark that I had come there contrary to the wishes of Joseph. Latterly I understood that his refusal to learn the business was the leading cause of this great change in my life.

"There was a warm scene between father and son, and the father had sworn a solemn oath that he would not leave the

foundry in ignorant hands ; but his son would not give way ; the son understood giving way even less than the father ; and so I came into their dwelling in the unenviable position of an apple of discord to carry out the threat of the old man, that he would choose another successor.

"From this time forth, the alienation between the father and son became every day stronger. Joseph never said a word to me in the presence of his father, and his father, by a double share of friendliness towards me made his coolness towards his son come out still more strongly. In spite of all, I felt myself fortunate in my position.

"Except at meal-times, I was seldom seen in the family circle. All day being actively engaged in the foundry, I devoted my evenings to the studies which I had always continued. This sort of life passed uniformly and methodically, for two more years. Everything was nearly the same except the conduct of Joseph Muller, which was gradually getting from bad to worse. His absence from home was the consequence of the alienation between himself and his father. This absence from home led to bad company, and bad company led to the debasing habits of play and drink.

"Twice had the father with large sums of money saved his name from shame and dishonor. Twice had the son given his promise of repentance and improvement. Now a third time things came to a crisis.

"I happened to be in the counting-house when a bill was presented to Mr. Muller, drawn upon him by Joseph without any right or notice.

"From the pallor which overspread his earnest countenance, from the trembling fingers with which he silently subscribed his name, I saw that something unusual must have taken place.

"At the very same moment that the servant left the counting-house with the

bill, Joseph came in and took his place at his desk.

"Understanding that something had occurred, I kept the father and son in my eye whilst I was counting out some money in the course of business. Had Joseph actually no suspicion of the storm that was gathering over his head, or was it only an apparent calmness with which he sat himself down at his desk ?

"I do not know, but I saw the young man was alarmed when Mr. Muller, placing his hand upon Joseph's shoulder, bade his son follow him.

"They both left the counting-house in silence ; what passed between them I cannot tell you, Bruno. No one was a witness of their interview, which, as I afterwards heard from the housekeeper, lasted no longer than half an hour.

"Loud and passionate words reached us from the room, and Joseph at last rushed out in wild haste. Only half an hour later he left the house, and, as was afterwards ascertained, he shipped himself at once off to America.

"Neither word nor sign was ever afterwards received from him. For two whole days the old man was entirely invisible. His book-room, where the interview with Joseph had taken place, and which was above the parlor, was closed, and for eight and forty hours old Mrs. Sass and I heard him walking up and down the room with restless and hasty steps. As often as the times arrived for meals, Mrs. Sass ventured to knock at the door, but without any result. Other measures we dared not take.

"On the third day, in the morning, he came unexpectedly into the counting-house —altered and grown thin. His head, once so proudly carried, was bent down ; his dark eyes were sunk hollower and deeper than ever, but externally he was calm as before.

"Joseph's desk was taken away from the

counting-house, but all else went on as before. The same evening I was invited into Mr. Muller's room. When I entered, I found him sitting at the table with a lighted candle near him and a great many papers spread before him, whilst he was holding one of the papers in the flame. Without saying a word he pointed to a chair on the other side of the table, and I took my place there in silence, after which I had fully a quarter of an hour to observe him in before he addressed a word to me. Various papers, almost all sealed up, I saw him hold in the candle and burn one after another. He then stood up to take out of the bookcase the great folio Bible with the silver clasps, which had been a family heirloom, and in which, from time immemorial, in old-fashioned manner, the birth and marriage of every member of the family was entered. He then cut out a portion of a leaf and also held that in the candle till the scorched brown tinder threatened to burn his fingers, his trembling fingers which betrayed the inward sufferings of his soul, of which his rigid countenance gave no sign. He then slowly directed his piercing gaze at me.

"Do you know of what you have been the witness, Eversberg?"

"No, Mr. Muller," I stammered, alarmed at his unexpected question.

"Then, I will tell you. You have been the witness of this, that a father has buried his son." He said these words in a solemn tone, but his voice sounded hollow and strange, and before I could answer him, he proceeded—

"Thus far I have had every reason to be satisfied with you, Eversberg, and I have therefore, as a childless old man, decided to constitute you my successor and heir. Henceforth you shall take upon yourself, under my direction, the whole management of the iron foundry, and I shall take care that it is known, and that people shall pay you the respect due to their future

master.' 'Be silent,' he cried, in a rough and passionate tone, as I began to speak a word in favor of his cast-off son.

"'Be silent,' he repeated, though I was already silent with fear, 'and never again dare to mention that name in my presence, or, by Heaven, I will instantly drive you out of my house like a dog. If I constitute you my successor, it is because I think you are capable of keeping up the honor of the foundry, which was the property of my great-grandfather, and not because I am specially inclined towards you, or am contemplating your happiness in this matter. I tell you this with the object of relieving you of all thanks, as regards myself, but I lay upon you a solemn duty to make the object of your life the welfare and prosperity of the foundry. If you will truly fulfil this condition with all your strength, swear it to me with your hand upon the Bible which now lies before you.'

"I took the oath, Bruno; with what feelings I left the room I can scarcely describe to you. In the boldest dreams of my imagination, the future which so unexpectedly opened before me had found no place. I grew dizzy at the prospects which rose thus suddenly before me, but I shuddered at the injustice which had led to them. I always knew that Joseph Muller was thoughtless, but not irretrievably had. I felt that it was in a blind passion that the father and son, who in the bottom of their hearts felt warmly for each other, must have spoken the words which had caused this deep breach between them. I felt like a thief who had stolen away from the son his rightful inheritance, and yet at the same time there came the stimulus of gratified ambition, the main passion of my young life, from the moment that I knew myself. There arose, too, the castle in the air of riches, which I had been building for years, now about to become real; and I was too weak, I will say too cowardly, to offer any real resistance.

"The following morning, the book-keeper, the inspectors and clerks, were called into the counting-house, and there I was formally presented to them as their future master. Now followed three more years, which glided by like a dream.

"These three years had transformed Mr. Muller into a weak old man, and gradually the whole management of the foundry had fallen into my hands. Still the master, every morning, went his rounds through the counting-house and foundry, but in effect he interfered hardly at all, and was surly whenever I wished for his advice upon some matter or other relating to the foundry.

"I was then five-and-twenty—young, healthy, and strong, with a brilliant future before me, which seemed to come nearer and nearer as the old man began to fall off in strength and clearness of mind, and his end was regarded by every one as approaching.

"That I did not long for the death of the old man, to whom I was so much indebted, I can assure you, Bruno, without falling short of the exact truth which I wish strictly to adhere to.

"I was fully content with my position : I had a large income, more than sufficient for my wants ; and as I have already told you, I was in fact, if not in name, the uncontrolled lord and master in the foundry.

"The following year, Bruno, the eighth from my entering into the foundry, terminated the uniform succession of events. It began with a dispute between Mr. Muller and myself over a place in the counting-house which had become vacant.

"I wished it to be filled by a young man who had a very good recommendation in his favor, but my master held obstinately to his intention of giving the place as the last chance of conversion to good ways, to the son of a friend who had asked for it.

"Perhaps it was the remembrance of his own son, which moved the old man to make this experiment with a good-for-nothing—for a good-for-nothing, in the fullest sense of the word, one might call Julius Stellenburg—whose life had a past which could not possibly promise anything for the future.

"I knew that, and was prejudiced against him before I had seen him ; and I was more than displeased that he was to be received into Mr. Muller's house, which, up till now, with us two (for old Mrs. Sass was dead, and had not been replaced) had been a quiet, somewhat dull, but yet a peaceful abode.

"I wish, Bruno, that I could paint to you Julius Stellenburg, as I recollect him at our first meeting. That merry countenance with a mocking expression about the lips, that countenance which bore the traces of a dissolute life : with thoughtlessness exhibiting itself in every trait, and yet having something attractive in it. I wish I could paint his portrait, with the peculiar faculty which he had of nestling himself into every heart, even of those who were prejudiced against him ; with the cunning to discover every one's weak side, and the capability to use that weak side to his own advantage, and with that entire want of principle which distinguished him.

"Between Mr. Muller and myself there did not exist any relation which could make one expect a hearty, friendly feeling on his side. I do not believe indeed that at the bottom of his heart he liked me. I have often thought that it was the successor of his son whom he could not endure in me ; but even those about him, who knew him as well as I did, could hardly have perceived this feeling under the mask of courtesy which he never for a moment laid aside. It was doubly strange to see him so attracted to Julius Stellenburg, who in a very few days had ingrati-

ated himself with him. It is true there was something irresistibly agreeable in his manner of talking and narrating. Evil itself, in his mouth, came to be a farce at which one laughed before one felt rising in one's heart the dislike which it deserved ; but, nevertheless, I was every day surprised when I saw the old man enlivened by the society of Stellenburg, when I saw him longing for the hour when Stellenburg would come in from the counting-house, when I saw him laughing at stories of past mischief much worse than that for which he had sent away his own son.

"But the old man was becoming doting and childish. He felt lonely without a family and dull for want of work, and I believe that, through the merriment of Julius Stellenburg, there arose a real enlivenment in the uniformity of his life. As far as regards the first few days, I had kept out of the new-comer's way as much as possible, but on the third evening after his arrival he walked into my room without any excuse of business.

"Don't disturb yourself on my account, my dear fellow," he said, taking up a cigar, and placing himself astride on a chair opposite to me with his arms crossed over the back of it. "Papa Muller intends that I should have a "good example," and as the good example has shown himself very little in my quarters, I am come to look at him at my leisure.

I was much disturbed at the impudent manner in which he intruded himself upon me, and I determined to frighten him away by taking no notice of him and by going on with some accounts which I was about, just as if he were not present, and I did so after a few cool words of excuse ; but whether I would or not his eyes, which I always saw fixed on me with a half-mocking expression as often as I raised my own, made me nervous and disturbed me at my work ; at last I impatiently threw my pen down.

"Mr. Stellenburg, it is impossible for me to go on working when you are looking at me in this way," I said crossly.

"Indeed, Mr. Eversberg," he answered, laughing ; "to tell you the truth, I had just determined to come and have a chat with you ; I hope, however, that you will discontinue addressing me as Mr., at least, if the distance between the "good example" and the sinner is not too great in your worship's eyes."

"How it happened I don't know, but one bore from Julius Stellenburg things which one would not bear from any one else.

There he sat as an uninvited guest in my own room, determined to banter me, and I bore it, and even began to feel the anger which his entrance had excited in me gradually disappearing.

"Do you know, Eversberg, I have come on purpose to ask whether you can help me to a piece of cord and a nail."

"What do you want it for?" I asked, while I rose to get what he asked for.

"Sit still, my dear fellow, there's no hurry, to-morrow will do as well ; I only wished to have it by me to hang myself if I felt inclined, for I see well enough that it is impossible for any jolly fellow to stay long in this house. Now you will say that for such a gaol-bird as myself I ought to look upon it as a fine thing to have come here into the counting-house at all ; to write till I am tired ; to cast up what I have not gained ; and all this for the cost of lodging and washing and a salary, which I could very well smoke away in a year in Manillas ; and all this, as well as the inestimable privilege of a good example." Here he again made me a mocking bow. "But the sum total of it is, that I feel about as much at my ease here as a fish on dry land."

"All beginnings are difficult, you will soon get accustomed to us here," I said by way of comforting him.

" 'Alas ! I never got accustomed to anything,' he answered, with a half sigh, 'except to a lazy, pleasant life in which I had nothing to do. Look, Eversberg, there are individuals who are beasts of burden from their cradles ; there are others into whom you cannot hammer industry, do what you will. If one of the last-mentioned sort be born a Rothschild, or a Russian Prince with a silver mine, into whose mouth fall ripe pears and roast pigeons, then he is a good noble fellow all his life long ; but if he comes into the world as an ordinary man, with a purse as empty as the vessel of the Danaides, he is called a rogue from the very instant he gets into jacket and trousers ; and a "good example" who happens to meet him, creeps back into his shell whilst he thinks of the proverb, "That he who touches pitch will be defiled." Isn't it so, Eversberg ? Good-night.'

" He got up and left the room suddenly, and I can only say, Bruno, that I felt ashamed of myself. Who was I that I placed myself so much above him ? I was ashamed, and from the next day forwards I endeavored by double courtesy to make up for my former reserve. From that day the confidence, which to my misfortune gradually arose between us, continually increased. Julius Stellenburg was of a good family, and, before his dissolute life began, had lived much in good society. The good manners which were peculiar to him, the free and easy mode in which he carried and expressed himself, were the first things which I, the son of a bourgeois, learned to admire in him, and in which I could not but recognize his superiority, and the changes and vicissitudes of his past life, in all the relations of which he had suffered shipwreck, had given him the advantage of an experience far beyond his years. I can well believe that his stories could not always have stood the touchstone of truth, or that at least it was

an ornate and embellished truth which he served up to me ; but it was impossible not to find his stories entertaining, and the society of Julius was a welcome change in the uniformity which thus far had distinguished my life. Gradually he knew how to tempt me to take part in some of the pleasures which Dilburg could afford.

" To what may be called society, we had neither of us access ; but in public amusements, such as concerts and plays, or balls, or réunions of the second circle in the town, I soon learnt to take pleasure, and to find in them an agreeable variety from my laborious life.

" The more confidential we were with each other, the freer became Julius in expressing principles which shocked me, and which more than once made me determine to draw back from him ; but somehow or other he contrived again to draw me along with him, and the fear of his laughing at me contributed not a little to this result ; and after a time, it was a feeling of gratitude which attached me to him.

" For it was in that year, Bruno, that I first met your mother ; but I can hardly call it a meeting, because there was so great a distance between her social position and mine, that this was not possible. But I saw her at a public concert a short time after she had become an orphan, and had taken up her abode with the Dilburg family. Think of the lovely, attractive countenance of your mother seven-and-twenty years ago, in all the bloom and freshness of youth. I cannot dwell on it any more—it would take from me the power of writing further to you, and I wish that all should be fully cleared up between you and me before o-morrow shall bring you to me. Let it be sufficient for you, my son, that I was in love with your mother long before she had ever spoken a word to me, that I loved her with a passion which bordered upon madness, and having

regard to the distance in rank and station which separated us, it was indeed a madness.

"Julius Stellenburg was my confidant. I alluded just now to a feeling of gratitude which attached me to him—it had relation to his successful efforts to make me acquainted with your mother. He knew her earlier, when her parents, whom he was in the habit of visiting, were still living. He had not made a single acquaintance amongst the best families in Dilburg, although his good birth would have made it very easy for him to have done so.

"Nevertheless, for my sake, he made an exception with respect to Johanna Van Reenen. He reminded her at a public concert of their former acquaintance, and on the next opportunity he presented me to her. I fear that the first time I spoke to her I must have made a sorry figure before her whom I loved. The painful feeling of my social inferiority, which had so long slumbered, woke up with redoubled strength since I had Johanna's image in my heart; but she, with her friendliness and good loving heart, knew very soon how to put me at my ease; and from that evening I frequently spoke to her in public places.

"I don't believe that the family where she lived saw this with pleasure, but my love was too great to be disturbed by any one, so long as her eyes, with their friendly expression, gave me welcome, and shone as two stars of hope in my young heart.

"It was then, Bruno, that for the first time the desire became strong in me that the good position which would be mine after the death of the old man should be speedily realized.

"Before that time, to declare my love to your mother would have been more than an absurdity; even when I should be the owner of the foundry, then she would have to take a step downwards to become

my wife; and although there lived in my heart a hope that I was not regarded by her with indifference, yet such a sacrifice would it have been for her in the position I then occupied, that I could not propose to her.

"I lived for some months in this excessive agitation. The anxious fear that some one else might win the heart that I loved, and the impossibility of pleading my wishes before the proper moment should have arrived, deprived me of rest and patience; and more than once I caught myself calculating as to the probable end of my benefactor. I call him so advisedly, Bruno, that I may teach you to see with perfect clearness the unpardonableness of my crime. In the fullest sense of the word he was my benefactor. Through him I was what I had become; through him I had at once come to the fulfilment of my life's dream, to riches and respect, and yet I longed for his death with feverish anxiety.

"There was a time when this criminal wish seemed about to be fulfilled. The old man had a fit, and his end was considered at hand by the physicians. Nevertheless, contrary to all expectations, he recovered, and a month later the last traces of his indisposition—even the partial paralysis of his limbs—entirely disappeared. But owing to that illness, a great change had taken place in the condition of his mind. The stupor which, as it proceeded, threatened to end in absolute childishness, had disappeared, and had given place to all the clearness of intellect which had formerly distinguished him. It was the last flicker of the flame of life before it should become extinguished forever, to use the expression of the physicians. All the garrulity of his later years had vanished; he was silent and earnest, as I had known him on my first acquaintance, and his partiality for Julius Stellenburg seemed to have quite passed off with that half-childish condition; but he

was physically weaker than he had ever been before. His back was bent, and his hair, which had been silver gray, was now snow white. To me he was more friendly and hearty than I had ever known him.

"On a certain day, when I entered his room, I found him bending over a plaything, his face hidden in his hands, and he was sobbing as if his heart would break. I withdrew as unobservedly as I had entered, but it was a deadly pale face that looked at me out of the glass when I entered my room, which I sought under the first influence of the shock I had received. I had seen the box open, in which all that belonged to Joseph Muller had been hidden. The plaything was his; it was the father who was weeping over his son and the memory of his childhood. From that instant all the ice-crust on the heart of the old man was melted.

"Owing to his constantly increasing bodily weakness, he seldom left his room, but I could never go in there without seeing laid before him a miniature portrait of Joseph when a child.

"It is with difficulty that I can make my sensations in those days intelligible to you. I can bring them before my mind only as if in the cloud of an obscure dream. With a despairing feeling I saw the castle in the air which I had been building all these years fall down, and the dearest wishes of my heart buried under its ruins. I suffered fearfully. For some months the friendship between Julius and me had been much diminished. My refusing him money, which he constantly endeavored to borrow from me in greater sums, had produced a coolness between us. In the first half year, his conduct had been in all ways satisfactory; but his making acquaintance with a few dissolute young men had brought him back into old ways, and I began to foresee the day when it would be impossible to conceal his conduct any longer from old Mr. Muller, upon which his dismissal from his

present employment would become a necessity. But, although our intimacy diminished, it had not escaped him that a change had taken place in myself, and upon his repeated question what had happened, I at last made him share in the fear which I had of a reconciliation between the father and the son, and the change which this might produce in my prospects. At first he gave me little answer or comfort. The following evening, however, he did not go out as he had been in the habit of doing latterly, but came and sat with me in my room, in order, as he said, to have a little friendly chat.

"But in fact, all his conversation had one object—under the appearance of friendship and sympathy to feed and to keep alive the anxiety and despair of my heart. In those days I was not in a state for calm consideration, so as to see through his devilish design. I allowed myself to be carried along with him in the description which he gave me of my position, should Joseph Muller be recalled by his father, or how it would look when all the years that I had labored in the factory would turn out to be for the benefit of the heir, and when Johanna Van Reenen would be married to another.

"I was in this state of feeling when my master sent for me. A flush came across his wasted, wrinkled face when he began, with a weak voice, to speak to me. 'Eversberg,' said he, 'I ought to have listened to you when you wished to defend Joseph. I was a fool, blinded by passion; but Heaven be thanked that I have lived long enough to learn this, and to make good my mistake. Will you help me in this? I know this, that I have flattered you with the expectation of being my heir and successor; but I have learned to understand that I ought not to do this by passing over my own son, from whom I should thus take what rightly belongs to him. That I shall know how to reward your faithful services as they deserve, I need not assure

you. I am fully aware of the great debt of gratitude which I owe to you; but my thankfulness will be unlimited if you will help me to trace out my son. I shall die tranquilly if I can but lay my hand with blessing on the head which in my passionate folly I had cursed.'

"I at once promised him that I would write to the Dutch consul at New York, and by his intervention I would place advertisements in the principal American papers. The blow which I had so long apprehended had thus fallen upon me, Bruno. With death in my heart, I nevertheless was able sufficiently to command myself so that the old man could see nothing of the bitter disappointment that his words had occasioned me.

"When I communicated this in the evening to Julius Stellenburg, he laughed.

"'To grieve is old women's work, but a man should act,' he said.

"'Act, how can I act?' I answered bitterly.

"He then spoke in a whisper—a word which made my blood stand still in my veins.

"'Satan!' I said, turning my back upon him, whilst my look would certainly have expressed all the horror and contempt that at that moment I felt for him. But the word that he had spoken sounded in my ears the whole night. It drove my blood wild through my veins. It made me half mad by the temptation which was contained in it, and I did not write to the consul, as I promised the old man, who had laid his head down peacefully with the understanding that it had been done.

"For two whole days I did not speak a word to Stellenburg of my own accord. On the third day he came into my room as if nothing had happened between us. It was a little piece of news that he came to impart to me; the news that there was a report that Johanna Van Reenen was about to be married to a rich widower. In the

despair of my heart, I listened to that word, which he again spoke, without the horror which, on the first occasion, it had awakened in me.

"And when he saw that I had listened, he set forth to me the plan, as it seemed to him capable of being executed, and as it must long have been worked out in his head, in order to come to that accuracy and clearness with which he gave it me for my consideration.

"But I still hesitated. I felt as if I was put in a magic circle, and that I had no means of breaking loose from it, and yet my better feelings still maintained the upper hand. At that time I accompanied Julius, as before, to a concert, where I knew for certain I should meet your mother, and I did meet her in his presence. I drank in a full draught of the sweet poison of my passionate love. When I returned home in the evening I found the old man, contrary to his usual custom, not yet in bed. He was feverish and nervous, and would not sleep till I had promised to summon the notary, who had the custody of his will, for the following day.

"'I must make good what I can, Eversberg. Heaven knows if I shall see my Joseph again!'

"In that night, Bruno, the hellish plan between Julius and myself was fully ripened.

"To Mr. Muller I said that the notary was out of town, and would return in a few days; but, in point of fact, I had no more written to him than to the consul. In the afternoon of the following day I went from home as if on foundry business. In those days Dilburg's connection with the outer world was still kept up by boat and diligence, and I departed by diligence to Arnheim, as I had done many times before, to go thence on the following day to Utrecht and Amsterdam. At the first stopping place, Vörsten, situated about an hour from here, I left the diligence, and

asked for a room at a lodging-house which I knew, under the pretence of a bad pain in my head which hindered me from proceeding on my journey any further. I gave out that I should immediately go to bed, and wished to be undisturbed till the following morning. I chose a room on the ground-floor, and carefully locked the door. There I remained sitting quietly till it became dark. Then I opened the window carefully, and, when I had got out, I made use of the darkness to depart unobserved, and to take my way back to Dilburg.

"It was a dark night, and but for my knowledge of the way, I should have found it difficult to reach the town. The darkness, however, was so far favorable to my design that I could not be recognized by the people that I met, and those were few; and then, as you know, the house and factory being outside the town, I was able to reach the outer door unobserved without any particular precaution.

"Julius Stellenburg left the door open, according to our agreement. I shuddered as I entered the door. I was in too great a state of excitement to be perfectly conscious of what I was doing as long as I was in motion in my long walk. I now well remember that during the walk I did not think of the crime which I was going to commit, but of her whom I loved. But I had no sooner opened the back door, and entered the house, than the full idea of the crime I was about to commit flashed on me like lightning.

"The desire to fly from temptation; to go far away where never man should know what black design had dwelt in my soul, now possessed me. It was the voice of my better self which once more made itself heard before it was finally overpowered by that of the bad angel, who again whispered in my ear the words of Julius—

"'What is the life of an old doting man worth, who, perhaps, has not a month

more to live, and who, by our act, will have an easier death-struggle than mother Nature would have given him?'

"I shut the door, and slipped up-stairs to my room as softly as I could. It was eleven o'clock; all was still in the old house; the servants slept in a far-distant part of it.

"The old man slept on the same floor on which were Julius Stellenburg's and my rooms, close to the book-room where the strong box stood.

"When I opened the door of my room carefully, I drew back at the first moment at the sight of a stranger in a sailor's dress, with a light beard, who was sitting at the table. In the next moment Julius Stellenburg, for it was he, had taken off his false beard and showed me his usual face, with the mocking expression on his lips.

"'I see, at least, that my disguise is sufficient,' he said, with wonderful coolness; 'but it is half an hour too soon, and you must make use of the time to become calm.'

"Calm—it was indeed necessary. My excitement had made way for a nervousness which made me tremble from head to foot. My knees knocked together, and I was obliged to sit down to prevent myself from falling. I had not strength to utter a word, but sat silently opposite him; but after the first greeting he did not say anything.

"That half hour I shall never forget. The ticking of the clock over the door was the only sound that broke the deadly stillness. If it be possible for thought to stand still, that was my case in that horrible half-hour, during which a feeling of anguish was the only sensation which pervaded my consciousness.

"Julius Stellenburg, with his eyes closed, sat leaning back in a chair opposite to me, motionless as if asleep, and, when the striking of the clock announced that the half-hour had passed, he suddenly rose, and taking up the candle from the table, said—

"Now, Eversberg, be calm and resolute—be a man."

"I followed him to the old man's bedroom—both of us slipping along on our stockings. When I came to the door, I remarked for the first time that he grasped in his left hand a heavy axe.

"The old man was sleeping peacefully, wholly unconscious of the approaching danger.

"It was a feeling of penitence and compassion which made me seize Julius Stellenburg's hand, and whisper—'Not now—presently.'

"His answer was a contemptuous smile; but he let the axe sink down, and groped under the pillow in a dexterous manner to get the key of the strong box. Mr. Muller did not move, and we left the bed-room as softly as we entered it, intending to accomplish the murder when the robbery should have been effected.

"To open the strong box in the book-room, which I had done so constantly, was no difficult matter even for my trembling hands. Julius Stellenberg stood holding the light, whilst I collected all the ready cash and papers of value, to make up 100,000 gulden, which he had made a condition of his co-operation. He took it—the price of blood—and coolly put it in his pocket; but just as I was closing the strong box, a rustling behind us made us look round in alarm. In the open door stood the old man, with his snow-white hair, and his figure bent with weakness and old age.

"He did not speak, he did not call for help, but he stood there like a dead man risen from the grave, with a glassy look in his dark, deep-set eyes.

"Bruno, spare me the description of what then followed—it seems to me now s an impossible, horrible dream. I cannot describe to you what remains of it in my memory.

"It seems to me now incredible that I

should have had the strength and the sense to get back again to Vörsten; and that the following morning I should have gone on to Arnheim, but so it was; and I there had a letter recalling me, which announced what was already written in my heart in fiery, ineffaceable characters.

"And from thence began that life of lies and hypocrisy which I had prepared for myself. Yet I passed the first days in too great excitement to realize the full meaning of the crime I had committed. Above all things, I was impressed by the high game I had played; that my whole future rested on the chances that I should not betray myself by a single word; and that the hiding-place of Julius Stellenburg should not be discovered.

"That, in the event of discovery, he would perform his promise of not betraying my complicity with him—on that promise I did not deceive myself for a single moment.

"Bruno, could you, with the upright, honorable mind which I know you to possess, place yourself in my position in those days? The word that burnt on my tongue kept back by the mighty force of my will; every feature in my face kept in constraint, so that not a single trait should speak of the torture of my sin-laden soul, and not a word allowed to come forth from my lips which had not been well-considered as harmless. Can you imagine to yourself what I felt on my return to the old house which I had secretly left in the darkness of the night? Can you form any notion of the sensations which assailed me under all the conjectures relating to the murder which were uttered in my presence—at the sight of my victim to whose bed I was conducted—at the funeral which I followed in deep mourning, and lastly at the opening of the will, which crowned my fearful deed?

"Bruno, even if my whole subsequent life had not been a martyrdom with which I atoned, as no one else ever atoned, the

tortures of the first week would have been a complete and satisfying punishment. You know, Bruno, how a little rustle used to make me start and tremble. That was the consequence of the shock to my nerves in the first week, when, at each unexpected ringing of a bell, a cold sweat stood on my forehead owing to the terrible anxiety which possessed me that it was the police who had come to arrest the murderer.

"Whilst thus tortured by all those deadly fears and self-reproaches, I entered upon the bequest of the old man.

"As not the slightest shade of suspicion rested on me from any one, the part which I played was so far easier for me to keep up than would otherwise have been the case. My pale, worn countenance was attributed to the natural consequences of the shock which the violent death of my benefactor had given me. Heaven knows whether it was not regarded as the proof of a feeling and grateful heart. When the first months had gone by, and Julius Stellenburg was not discovered : when the affairs were put in order, and Joseph Muller was summoned to take possession of his share of the property which the law had secured for him ; then I breathed more freely, and the leaden weight, with which the crime had pressed upon my conscience, diminished in proportion with the danger of discovery.

"And as every week passed, the calmer and safer I felt. Yes, indeed, my audacity was at last such, that I gave the most striking proof of my own innocence by offering a large sum of money for the head of the murderer, in order to give a greater stimulus to the inquiries of the police.

"But never, certainly, had a crime been committed under more favorable circumstances, for even this did not lead to his discovery—Julius Stellenburg was, and remained, undiscovered.

Half a year—the most fearful half-year

of my life—had passed away, and my mind had recovered its balance.

"In the mean time I had made a compromise with my conscience, with which I sought to purchase inward peace and rest. I would atone for the past by an exemplary life, as a man, as a citizen, and as a Christian. I would apply the wealth I had obtained in this unrighteous and criminal matter, better than, according to all probability, the real heir would have applied it.

"And for a long time these resolutions effectually hushed my conscience to sleep, and at the same time revived, with redoubled force, the passion which had long slumbered in me.

"I added to my first unpardonable action yet another : I asked your mother in marriage. Had she declined my proposal I should have chosen the solitary life of a bachelor in preference to the possibility of involving a woman in my disgrace. But I loved her too passionately, Bruno ; not with that noble love which, laying aside all thought of self, has only for its object the happiness of the loved one, but yet with all the strength and passion of which my heart was capable.

"And then for her sake I had committed the act which had occurred. She was the prize I wished to win ; for her sake I had sold my soul to Satan, and I could not—I would not—resign the treasure for which I had paid so dear a price.

"Half a year afterwards Johanna Van Reenen became my wife. But two days after she had entered my house, the news came that it was thought that the police were on the trail of Julius Stellenburg. It was a false report, repeated after long intervals, and was not confirmed, but as regarded my peace and happiness, it was like a sword hanging by a thread over my guilty head. Was it this renewed anxiety which again shocked my nerves, or was it a symptom of disease of the brain ? I know not, and I have never ventured to consult

a physician on the subject ; but from that day forward a terrible vision became the torment of my life.

"I have told you, Bruno, of the fixed, glassy eyes of Mr. Muller when he came upon us by the strong box. It was these eyes which, on a certain day, stared at me out of the dark corner of the room, whilst I was passing a pleasant twilight hour sitting by your mother on a sofa. It was these eyes which, since that day, when I awake in the stillness of the night, I see before me, which sometimes stagnate my blood in my veins, and sometimes make my hair stand on end in horror and alarm.

"These eyes ! always these eyes ! sometimes with intervals of weeks and months ; but when I was the least expecting it, they again appeared to me. Sometimes they glared over my shoulder and obliged me to look round ; sometimes I saw them close to your mother, and they frightened me away when I wished to sit down beside her ; sometimes they were in the counting-house between me and my paper, and they always stared at me out of the ledger whenever I made up the balance at the close of the year. When you were born, Bruno, they looked at me out of the cradle, over which in the full joy of a parent's heart, I leant to kiss my son.

"I have little to add to this, Bruno.

"The factory increased in extent and prosperity. My domestic happiness was more perfect than I had ventured to hope in my boldest dreams ; my wealth increased ; the respect and consideration which I enjoyed increased every year, and I was the most wretched being who ever dragged on his miserable existence on this earth.

"A miserable existence, notwithstanding the affection of my wife, whom I loved with all the strength of my soul, and the possession of a son who would have satisfied the greatest expectations of any father's heart.

"But it was just these privileges which made my sufferings doubly heavy. The thought that the day would come when my wife and son would know who the husband and father was, whom they had esteemed and loved, sometimes made me half crazy. I made a last effort for the rest of my soul by pulling down the old house with which all the terrible recollections were bound up. Fool that I was ! —in the relief I felt when I saw the walls pulled down one after another, when for a long time—for months—the eyes appeared to me no more, and I breathed more freely in the new abode than I had ever done in the old one.

"Fool that I was ! Yesterday evening, when I walked through the new rooms, all lighted up, calmer and more tranquil than I had been for many a year, then, all at once, the eyes stared at me again, and with the same fixed and glassy look, which the remorse and misery of the last seven-and-twenty years had not taught me to endure.

"Bruno, when the temptation comes to you to curse your father for having stained your name and annihilated your future, remember how he has suffered for seven-and-twenty years, and how he has loved you. Let this be his defence with you. A fearful time it is for you and your mother—a fearful time also for me. May Heaven send us strength.

"I do not know how the truth has come to light. To-day's light, the first glimmer of which is now penetrating into my cell, will doubtless make all clear. This day will also bring you to me, my Bruno. I shall perhaps once more meet that look which you gave me when I was obliged to leave unanswered your hardly whispered question, "Father, you are innocent, are you not ? they can do nothing against you."

"That look, whilst you started back in horror, was a greater punishment than any

I had as yet undergone. With that look from my child Bruno, I drained my cup of suffering to the last dreg. Compared to this, all that earthly justice can demand of me is nothing. If it demands my life in return for the life which I shortened by my crime, I am prepared to give it. I am prepared for every other penalty which the law may require of me.

"For myself, I desire nothing more—I wish for nothing more—I hope for nothing more in this life. For eternity, I recommend my soul to God's mercy. I dare not look into the future of you and your mother. I need not tell you to love her, to be her support and comfort. I know you will be this. I know your noble heart too well.

"I will add nothing more to this. I think it must be weariness which makes my head throb and my pulse beat so fast, and, by taking what rest I can, I will now prepare myself for the troubles of to-day.

"Farewell, Bruno! Make your mother acquainted with the contents of this letter, so far as you think right. Tell her I know I have sinned against her beyond all pardon; but tell her also that she and her unmerited love have been my comfort during my miserable journey of life—that her image will live in my heart, and that I shall bless her name with my last breath.

"God bless you both!

"J. EVERSBERG."

CHAPTER IX.

DOMESTIC SKETCHES.

"Oh, sun, why do you shine so fiercely into the room? I shall just take the liberty of drawing down the blinds before your very nose."

It was Elizabeth who, three days after the much-talked-of ball which had terminated so sadly, addressed these words to the September sun as it shone into Emmy's room, and threw its kindly rays on her

pretty fair head, that turned restlessly backwards and forwards on her pillow.

In the capacity of nurse, Elizabeth had taken up her abode in the sick-room, and never was an invalid more carefully and tenderly nursed than Emmy by the young girl who was a sister to her, not only in name, but in affection.

"Now then, Physic, let us see whether Emmy will have anything more to say to you to-day than yesterday?" With these words she went up to the bed with a glass of medicine in her hand. But Emmy pushed her hand away, saying in a peevish voice, "Do let me alone with that bitter stuff."

"Bitter dem Mund ist zum Herzen gesund," exclaimed Elizabeth, setting down the glass; but the next moment she was kneeling down by the bed, and taking Emmy's hand, she said in a tender voice of entreaty:

"Come, dear Emmy, do not be so obstinate; take the draught the doctor ordered for you. Who knows what good it may do you? I should so like to see you better again soon."

"Physic won't do me any good, Elizabeth."

"What will do you good, then, dear?"

"If you will only answer the question I asked you three days ago—What has happened to Mr Eversberg? Don't you understand that I cannot rest till I am set at ease as to what has happened to my friends?"

"Oh, don't be always thinking of that, Emmy dear. Come, the matter must have its course. Dr. Brewer says that you were frightened by what occurred that night at the ball, and that we must let it alone until you are better. Come, drink up the draught like a good child, and do not ask me any more questions about things which I am not to talk about." And she again handed her the glass; but Emmy, raising herself up in bed, laid her feverish, burn-

ing cheek against Elizabeth's, and said in a beseeching tone :

"I will do as you wish, Elizabeth, and drink the whole bottle at one draught if you insist on it; but then you must tell me if Mr. Eversberg is still in prison."

Elizabeth hesitated a moment; she then simply said, "No, Emmy, he is no longer in prison."

"Then he is innocent," said Emmy, with a deep sigh of relief. But Elizabeth shut her mouth with a kiss, and laid her head back on the pillow.

"I have kept my part of the contract," she said playfully; "now you must keep yours."

And Emmy took the draught, and slept after it more tranquilly than she had done for some days.

Her illness had begun the day after the *fête*. She had held out well that evening till the very end. When Bruno was speaking those terrible words about his father, the room seemed to turn round; and when she understood clearly the sad fact which he announced, her instinctive sense of what would be unbecoming could hardly restrain her from obeying the impulse of her heart, and hastening to Bruno as he stood there in the middle of the ball-room speaking to the crowd.

Of what happened afterwards she had but a confused recollection. She knew that she had walked home on Otto's arm; that he had taken her to her room; and that later Elizabeth, nervously laughing and crying, was undressing there, and was chattering about the events of the evening; and that still later, after Elizabeth had left her, she had gone to bed cold and shivering, and could not sleep on account of the painful possibilities which kept whirling through her head as to the cause of the arrest of Bruno's father.

Towards morning she had fallen asleep, but when she awoke the noonday sun shone into her room, and Mrs. Welters

and the doctor were standing by the bed, and she heard him say, "Frightened—caught a chill—keep quite quiet and warm—I'll give you a prescription—better in a few days."

And so they had quieted her with soothing words whenever she brought forward the subject of the Eversbergs, which, during the last two days, she had in vain attempted to do with innumerable diplomatic manœuvres; even Elizabeth, who in general did not make her heart a place of concealment, was on this subject as mute as a fish.

All this had, however, so increased Emmy's restlessness that she could no longer endure the uncertainty, and hence ensued the conversation we have just related.

From this moment Emmy grew better, and when, a day or two later, she was sitting up in her arm-chair as a convalescent, she took advantage of the opportunity, when Otto came to visit her, to send Elizabeth down-stairs on some pretext or other. Elizabeth had no sooner left the room than Emmy exclaimed :

"And now, dear Otto, you must tell me all about it."

"Tell you what, Emmy?"

Two great tears glistened in her eyes.

"Why may I not know what has happened to Mr. Eversberg?" she said in a sad, reproachful tone. "Can none of you understand that this uncertainty makes me ill, and that otherwise I should have been well long ago? But I tell you what, Otto," she continued in a decided tone, while a deep blush spread over her cheeks, "if you don't tell me the truth, and the whole truth, I will go to the foundry, ill or well, and inquire for myself."

There was an expression in Emmy's eyes which convinced Otto that it would be better for her to hear the truth from his lips; for without fulfilling her threat literally, she would be sure to come to

know it in some way or other. But he answered her playfully, "Then I shall warn the police to keep a sharp look-out on all females escaping from their doctors." Finding, however, that she only turned away from him impatiently, he said in a serious tone, as he took her hand in his :

"Dear Emmy, if we have told you nothing of what has happened, you may be sure that we acted with the best intentions, for we thought that bad news would always come soon enough."

"But Elizabeth assured me that he is no longer in prison," said Emmy, interrupting.

"There Elizabeth was right, Emmy ; he is no longer in prison, but he is gone beyond the reach of all suffering and sorrow, and human justice."

"Is he dead, Otto?"

"Yes, dear child ; on the morning after he was taken to prison he was found dead in his bed. At first it was thought that he had put an end to himself; but the physicians have certified that he had a paralytic stroke, probably brought on by intense grief. He had spent the night in writing a long letter to Bruno, which was found on the table."

"Was he guilty?" The question was asked hesitatingly, in a half whisper.

"Yes, Emmy ; of that, alas! there is no possible doubt. Many years ago he, together with one of the clerks, must have murdered his master. Naturally there are many stories in circulation, which for the most part are exaggerated accounts of the affair. When you go out again you will hear more versions of it than you will like. I shall therefore confine myself to the main facts, which amount to this : that a certain Stellenburg, whom you may remember to have heard spoken of as the murderer of the former owner of the foundry, appears after the deed to have absconded to America, where, by a curious chain of events, he had lately come across the son

of the murdered man, and had confessed the crime on his death-bed, and had betrayed the name of his accomplice. This son, Joseph Muller, must have brought the deposition of Stellenburg, signed by him and two witnesses, to Europe, and on the evening of the ball he came straight to Dilburg with the officer of justice from Arnheim, who arrested Mr. Eversberg forthwith. There, Emmy, now you know the whole truth ; take care that it does not agitate you more than is good for you."

Emmy's only answer was a fresh burst of tears ; but when the first outbreak of emotion was over, she quickly recovered herself.

"What a fearful thing it is for Aunt Johanna and Bruno!" she exclaimed. "Oh, if only I were not ill just at this time ! Will you tell them that I *cannot* go to them ?"

"My dear child, they know that you are ill ! They have denied themselves to every one almost without exception, and have thus shut the door on the curiosity of indifferent people, which would, of course, be so painful to them. But I have been with them every day, and have been able to be of use to them in many things. This morning I went with Bruno to the churchyard. It was a sad duty which the poor young fellow had to perform. In order that it might all take place very quietly, and to prevent a crowd collecting, we had gone very early in the morning to the churchyard, whither the coffin had been brought in the night. When we arrived there, notwithstanding the early hour, we found the churchyard full of workpeople from the foundry, who had got wind of the time appointed for the funeral, and wished to pay the last mark of respect to their old master. It seemed as if either every one had forgotten that it was a criminal who was being consigned to the grave, or as if death in their eyes had atoned for the crime. Many came up

to Bruno before they cast the handfuls of earth on the coffin, and in their own way spoke a kind word to him. One said how good Mr. Eversberg had been to the lowest among them. Another remembered that the master had paid him three months' wages when he had been thrown out of work by illness. A third told of medical aid supplied to him and his family, and of journeys paid for in order that he might visit an aged mother. I really believe, Emmy, that it did Bruno good, although I saw he was frightened when he found that the churchyard was not empty as he had expected ; and when he heard the grateful words spoken of his father, he lifted up his head again, and thanked the speakers by a pressure of the hand. But as he was going out of the churchyard there was standing at the gate the overseer of the works, who had been dismissed for dishonesty last year, and just as Bruno passed him this man said, with a scornful laugh :

" 'Pride cometh before a fall, my good sir. I had much rather be called a thief than a murderer !'

" Bruno very wisely took no notice of these insulting words, even by a look ; but I believe that they did away with much of the good impression produced by the heartiness of the workmen.

" I was glad for his sake when the sad ceremony was over ; but I wish I could make it clear to you how nobly Bruno has conducted himself during the whole of this melancholy affair. You are, of course, aware that it must make a great change, both to himself and to his mother. He began by writing a letter to Mr. Muller, stating that his mother and he would vacate the house without fail in a fortnight, and would then hand over to him all the money and the money's worth which were in their hands ; that Mr. Muller was at liberty to take immediate possession of the foundry, and to make any inventories he thought fit. Upon

this Mr. Joseph Muller asked for an interview, which Bruno acceded to ; and Mr. Muller told him that he would not take any money or property, except what was in hand at the time of his father's death, and which he knew, through Stellenberg, it was his father's intention to have left him ; that all money and property acquired since that time must be regarded as honorably gained, and as belonging to no one but the widow and son of the man who had earned them by his own industry. He also said that although he had felt bound to avenge the murder of his father on him who had done the deed, it had formed no part of his plan to enrich himself at the cost of those who were as innocent of the deed as himself, and who, to his real sorrow, must be involved in the fall of the murderer.

" Bruno, however, was immovable on this point, and was fully supported by his mother.

" Money earned by means of that money, which had been acquired by crime, he neither could nor would regard as his own ; and in refusing it he was fully convinced that he was acting according to the wish of his late father. Fortunately Aunt Johanna has some means of her own, and as she is to live with a niece in Rotterdam, who immediately on hearing of her misfortune offered her a home, she will not want much for herself, and will therefore be able to afford Bruno some assistance for a few years."

" And Bruno, Otto—what are his plans ?" asked Emmy, anxiously.

" Bruno has already applied for his discharge from the navy. He says that, after what has occurred, he could no longer serve honorably, and that he owes it to his comrades to leave the service. And perhaps he is right, poor young fellow, although for my own part, I cannot conceive that any one would be so indelicate as to make him suffer for guilt which is not his own. What his plans are, however, I do not know, for

he says but little ; and what I do know, I know through his mother, and not from himself."

Here the entrance of Elizabeth broke off the conversation between Otto and Emmy.

"Just as I thought," she exclaimed, indignantly ; and added in a snappish tone, "you must have done with my patient, Mr. Longtongue. Don't you know how to behave better than to make Emmy cry?"

And to embrace Emmy and weep with her was for Elizabeth the work of a moment.

In spite of all this, Emmy was far more calm and tranquil now she knew what was going on than when she was brooding over what were mere conjectures.

She was, indeed, forced to admit that it was worse than the worst she had imagined, and she felt almost ashamed to find that the grievous misfortune which had overtaken her friends, and the wretchedness which it brought upon them, were, as regards herself, lost in the sad, hopeless thought that Bruno must go away from her, and that, perhaps, she might never, never see him again.

After the first day and night, however, when her tears had flowed almost incessantly, she was much calmer than before. Elizabeth now had no difficulty in making her follow the doctor's advice, and she even now and then joined in the merriment which with Elizabeth was inexhaustible, and which just now served to sustain Emmy in her recovery. But it was just this imperturbable good humor, this continual disposition to fun, which made Emmy fearful of confiding to her the secret which so often burnt upon her lips —the secret of her love for Bruno, and of what had passed between them at the ball. It turned out, moreover, that her confession of it was rendered more difficult because Elizabeth took it into her head that any recollection of events connected with the Eversbergs would make Emmy

melancholy, and that the best way to make her forget the fate of her friends was to mention their names as little as possible.

As often as Emmy brought the conversation round to the subject of Bruno with a view to arrive at making her confession, Elizabeth contrived to turn it off again by a laugh, or by introducing another subject ; and thus Emmy, perceiving her object, became silent herself on the subject she had most at heart, so that from that time all that related to the Eversberg family became a tabooed topic between the two young ladies.

One morning, a few days after Emmy's conversation with Otto, Mrs. Welters came into her room.

"Quite dressed, are you, Emmy?" she asked with some surprise.

"Yes, mamma ; I wish to come down-stairs to-day. I feel perfectly well, and I will make no bad use of the good care which has been taken of me."

"I think you should remain up-stairs for a few days," said Mrs. Welters. "Elizabeth is quite willing to sit with you, that you know ; and it is better that it should be so."

"But, mamma," said Emmy, whilst a slight blush colored her yet pale cheek, "I want to come down-stairs to-day, so that I may be able to go out to-morrow."

"I see no kind of necessity for that," replied Mrs. Welters, in the decisive tone which always alarmed Emmy ; "and what is more, so long as the wind is in the north I will not consent to it."

The blush in Emmy's cheek grew deeper, whilst she said bravely, but in a half-beseeching tone :

"Mamma, I must go out to-morrow, or the day after to-morrow at latest ; and if you think it too cold I will ask you to let me take a carriage."

"And pray where do you wish to go, miss?" This was said in a sharp tone which promised little for Emmy's request,

and which for a moment quite frightened her.

But after a little hesitation, she answered, "To Mrs. Eversberg's, to wish her good-bye before she goes."

"I would be candid, Emmy, and not name the mother when I meant the son."

All the blood left Emmy's face at these words of her stepmother, who at the same moment gave her a piercing look as if she would discover her most secret thoughts.

But Emmy did not shrink from this look, and recovering herself quickly, looked Mrs. Welters steadily in the face, and continued fearlessly: "Yes, mamma, I will also take leave of Bruno as well as his mother. I think it my duty to say a word of comfort and sympathy to my old friends in the great sorrow that has come upon them; and it was for this that I told you I must go out."

Emmy had spoken these last words in a no less decisive tone than Mrs. Welters; yet she added more submissively, whilst her countenance resumed the expression of entreaty, "I hope you have nothing against this, mamma."

"As we are upon this subject, Emmy, I will at once tell you that I have thought your conduct towards Bruno Eversberg for the last few months very unbecoming, especially on the evening of the ball. I admit that young Eversberg may have entertained serious intentions towards you, and that you are probably not disinclined towards him yourself; and, as far as that goes, in former circumstances he would have been a very proper match for you. But you must agree with me that it would be little honorable for us if your name were now to be coupled with that of the son of a criminal, and I fear that your behavior has given more occasion for that than I like. In one word, Emmy, every one knows that you are indisposed, and the Eversbergs cannot take it ill if on that account you cannot visit them; whilst a

visit from you would create food for gossip in the town, which would not be agreeable either to your father or to myself."

"Papa cannot intend that I should feign indisposition in order not to visit the friend of my mother and my old playfellow, now that they are in trouble," was Emmy's reply, spoken in an impassioned tone, whilst the tears sprang from her eyes. "I should be ashamed for the sake of the memory of my mother, who loved them; I should be ashamed for my own sake, if such a motive as the gossip of the Daburgers should keep me back. I entreat you, mamma, do not require this of me; let me go for a few moments to them, and I shall be grateful to you for my whole life."

Calm and unmoved, Mrs. Welters let her say this; and when Emmy had finished she replied:

"Listen: once for all, Emmy, I am not used to any contradiction from my children, when I have come to a resolution in a matter in which I think I can judge better they can. I cannot submit to it from you, and we therefore will not exchange any further words on the subject. I repeat, that it is my wish that you remain at home until the Eversbergs shall have left the place. If you do not act according to my wishes, you must take the consequences. It is the first proof that I shall accept of your obedience; and if you wish, as you have just said, to win my good-will, you can now show that obedience to me. I look to deeds, and think very little of words."

Oh, how Emmy disliked her stepmother, who upon this left the room, and Emmy heard her go into the next room as calmly as if nothing had happened, to see if all was in order there. Oh! how, at that moment, Emmy detested the cold, hard heart, which knew nothing but calculation and self-interest, and pitilessly excluded every feeling at variance with stern reason.

Sobbing aloud, she threw herself upon the bed. In half an hour she got up with burning cheeks, and paced up and down the room in an excited state.

A fierce contest between love and duty raged within her. There was a moment when she hastened to the door with a sudden determination to call in the intervention of her father. She felt instinctively that her stepmother's mention of her father's disapproval was a fiction, and that he ought to hear the first word of the affair from herself. But the next moment she thought better of it, and withdrew her hand from the door. To be the cause of dissension between man and wife, to sow contention where before her return home peace had reigned, to come to her father with complaints against his wife! . . .

No, a thousand times rather bear the consequences of her disobedience than that; for, excited as she was, Emmy was yet quite able to see clearly the whole seriousness of the case.

The visit to the Eversbergs was to be the choice of peace or war between herself and her stepmother. The wish of her stepmother had been made known in terms which would make it a definite defiance if Emmy should disobey her. And yet what was the approbation or disapprobation of her stepmother compared with her love for Bruno and her passionate longing to see and speak to him once more?

It was a contention which lasted the whole day.

Emmy did not go down-stairs, as had been her plan in the morning. Her mind was in too rebellious a condition for her to be able to meet the gaze of Mrs. Welters, and she did not feel in a state to control herself sufficiently to conceal from the family what was going on within her.

To Elizabeth only, in the fulness of her heart, she poured out her distress, saying, in conclusion, "I must go, Elizabeth; I will not, I cannot give it up."

But Elizabeth tried in every way to calm her.

"Don't do it, Emmy," she said. "Believe me, I know mamma better than you do. She would never forgive you; and you can't think how unhappy I should be if you were not good friends with her. And mamma is really right about this wind being too sharp for any one who has been ill. Who knows but what Bruno may come here just once to take leave? Come, Emmy dear, promise me you won't think of it any more."

But Emmy did not promise. The more she thought over the matter, the more unreasonable seemed the wish of her stepmother, and the more her heart rebelled against it.

All Elizabeth's endeavors to cheer her, therefore, suffered a total shipwreck that day; and when at last Elizabeth began to read aloud to her, her thoughts wandered far away from the book which at any other time would certainly have interested her.

Towards evening she came to the resolution to write a note to Otto, in which she entreated him to come to her on his way home from Uncle van Stein's. She would lay the case before Otto, and tell him what had occurred between Bruno and herself on the evening of the ball. She would yield to his opinion, and that, too, even if he prescribed obedience. It was a great disappointment to her when Mary sent back her note, with a few lines to say that Otto had not been with her that evening, and that he was gone to pay a visit at Beckley, and in all probability would not return till late.

In her disappointment, Emmy tore up her note into a hundred pieces, and her desire to call in Otto's counsel disappeared with her vain endeavors to find him.

That night sleep obstinately kept away from Emmy's bed. When the first dawn of morning began to trace the outlines of her room and its furniture, she lay with

her eyes open gazing into the diminishing obscurity, more and more excited by her sleepless night, and wavering more and more between obedience and opposition. In this mood many recollections of her childhood passed before her mind, recollections of the friendship which, in the lifetime of her mother, had united the families of Eversberg and Welters ; recollections of many a day of enjoyment in the little outings and expeditions made together in the neighborhood ; recollections of sorrow on both sides accepted and borne as sorrows in common ; recollections full of thankfulness, as Emmy thought, for the almost motherly love with which Mrs. Eversberg had treated her from her earliest childhood, and for the loving reception which, after her long absence, she had met with from this now severely tried family ; and then, again, the thought of Bruno, the beloved playfellow of her youth, and the thousand memories in which he played a prominent part, floated like visions in the half-darkness around her ; and when at last she fell asleep, it was with a happy smile on her lips, and her resolution was taken. When she woke up it seemed as if, with the short slumber after the sleepless night, all doubt had departed from her.

Elizabeth was not a little pleased, and somewhat surprised, to find that Emmy, compared with what she was the day before, was so calm and cheerful. She concluded from it that Emmy had acquiesced in the wishes of her mother, but as Emmy did not speak of it she thought it best to let the matter rest.

And, moreover, that morning Elizabeth's thoughts were occupied by such weighty matters, that there was not so much room left for Emmy's concerns as usual.

It was neither more nor less than a great party which the notary Klink was giving on the occasion of his daughter's betrothal, and which Elizabeth was to attend that

evening ; for the future bride was a school acquaintance of hers, and had herself been to ask Mrs. Welters' consent.

It was this party, and a new blue silk dress to which the finishing touches had to be given before the evening, that set Elizabeth to work with such activity, and entirely drove into the background the conflict between her mother and Emmy.

Sitting with her work in Emmy's room, her tongue went as fast as her busy hands ; and she was hardly silent for a moment, even when her mouth was so full of pins that the act of speaking involved the risk of her life.

But, with few exceptions, her talk was entirely about her own concerns ; in the first place, about all the expectations for the evening which she indulged in ; what acquaintances she would meet among the guests ; what dresses and ornaments they would probably wear ; how surprised and disgusted a certain Lisa Blom would be at her new dress. In all these suppositions Emmy did her best between whiles to show her sympathy by suitable words, while her own fingers flew and readily helped in the completion of the before-mentioned masterpiece.

But when Elizabeth, who had had her coffee up-stairs with Emmy, went down for a moment to consult her mother on some trifling difficulty in her work, Emmy instantly made use of the opportunity to carry out her intention.

Hastily taking her cloak and hat out of the wardrobe, she put them on hurriedly, slipped softly down-stairs, and without any one remarking her, reached the front door and the street.

CHAPTER X.

A GENEROUS STRUGGLE, IN WHICH LOVE TRIUMPHS.

THE weather was more favorable than on any of the previous days during Emmy's

illness. She felt, indeed, somewhat dizzy for the first few moments, but the sensation was quickly overcome by the wonderfully exhilarating effect which the fresh air always has upon any one who has been confined to the house for a longer or shorter period.

But Emmy's heart beat anxiously at the thought of her disobedience and the consequences which would inevitably follow it. But the nearer she approached to the foundry, the more she was satisfied with her decision; yet she felt nervous and worried when she rang at the well-remembered door.

As she stood on the doorsteps, and the noise of the foundry reached her as of old, whilst the trees and shrubs were visible just as ever over the garden wall, when the old servant with his familiar face opened the door, it seemed to Emmy like a dream, that this house was a house of mourning, and that she had come to say farewell to a family stained with shame.

But when she entered the well-known sitting-room, and Mrs. Eversburg stood before her in deep mourning, the sad truth seemed to break upon her in its full force; then all outward calmness forsook her, and sobbing she threw herself into the arms of the poor widow.

"He was so good to me, Emmy!" This was the only complaint which the trembling lips uttered; and this was the only feeling into which all reproach and all pain had resolved themselves; and to weep with her was the only way in which Emmy knew how to express her deep-felt sympathy. After the first emotion was over, they sat hand in hand by each other, and became so far composed that it was possible for them to converse.

"To know, Emmy, that he suffered so much during all these years, my poor husband, and then to think that I should have never noticed it, that I sat by his side cheerful and contented while he underwent the

greatest remorse and torture. To be glad that God has taken him to Himself, and yet to be able to say that even now he is as dear to me as before—"

Emmy felt intense compassion for the poor widow, and the last grain of repentance for her disobedience vanished when Bruno's mother laid open to her her poor heavily tried heart.

Gradually the future was spoken of between them; but time was costly to Mrs. Eversburg, who had so much to look after and put in order before her departure, which was close at hand, and every moment they were disturbed by one or other of the servants coming in to bring messages or receive orders.

At length, when Mrs. Eversburg was sent for to be present at the closing of a box, Emmy ventured to ask for Bruno, whose name had been trembling on her lip during the whole time of her visit.

"Bruno is up-stairs in the front room packing up his clothes," answered Mrs. Eversburg. "Would you like to go to him whilst I am busy with this trunk? He has always thought so much of you, that I am sure a friendly word from you would do him good. Will you?"

A few moments later, her repeated knocks having been unanswered, Emmy entered the room where Bruno was. He was sitting before a small table placed by the window; his head supported by his hands, and his back turned to the door, he seemed to be sunk in such profound thought that he did not remark Emmy's entrance, and he appeared to have forgotten everything around him, even the clothes lying about on the chairs and table, which he evidently intended to put into the trunk standing open near him.

Unobserved as she had entered, Emmy went up to him, calling him softly by his name, as she laid her hand on his shoulder.

Bruno started up as if struck by an electric shock. A deep red came over his

face, to give way the next moment to a death-like paleness, which made all too evident the stamp which sorrow had imprinted on his countenance in the last few days.

His face, so pale and fallen away, with the hollow, mournful eyes, with the painful expression of the mouth which formerly had seldom opened but with a smile, was to Emmy like the face of a stranger, and spoke of mental sufferings which made her heart overflow with compassion and tenderness.

But neither of them spoke a word, whilst he hastily cleared a chair for Emmy and placed it by the window. It was not till she had sat down that Bruno sufficiently mastered his emotions to be able to speak.

"It is kind of you, Emmy, to come to us once more. I could hardly have dared to count upon it."

The tone in which he spoke sounded to Emmy's ears cold and strange, quite different from the last time when he had spoken to her. He did not, moreover, go and sit by her, but stood with one hand leaning on the table and with the other stroking back his hair.

"You could hardly have dared to count upon it, Bruno? But you know well that I should have come before had I not been prevented by my illness, and that I must have been very ill indeed had I let you and your mother depart without coming to wish you good-bye."

"My intention was to have come this evening to take leave of your family," said Bruno, gradually recovering his calmness, and speaking in a more natural voice. "I shall do but little in this way besides, but I meant to make your family an exception; for always, and especially during the last few months, I have enjoyed so much kindness from them that I should feel I had been ungrateful if I went away without saying good-bye in person."

He said this as if the intended visit re-

quired a justification or excuse before Emmy.

As yet not a single word of comfort or sympathy had been spoken by her, and Bruno also did not allude to the misfortunes which had overtaken his mother and himself.

He had at last sat down, but at the table and nearly opposite the place where Emmy sat.

It was she who first broke the silence: "I hear, Bruno, that you have asked for your discharge from the navy?"

"Yes; and what is more, I have just received it." He pointed to the papers which lay before him on the table.

"Your mother told me that your plan is to go to America."

"Yes, that is my plan," answered Bruno. "When I was at New York a few years ago, I had letters of introduction to a certain Mr. Siddons, a rich merchant, who then received me so kindly and hospitably that after a fortnight's stay at his house I parted from him and his wife with the regret that one only feels in leaving old and true friends. Since that time I have been in constant correspondence with him; and I wish now to apply to him to obtain through his influence some employment or other. A man who is young and healthy, and will work in his shirt sleeves, is never at a loss, Emmy, and especially in America. This is my least sorrow."

Again there was an interval of silence. When Bruno was again about to say something, and looked up at Emmy, he seemed struck with her unusual paleness, and with more warmth than he had yet spoken, he said in an anxious tone: "I hope you are quite recovered, Emmy? Perhaps it was too cold for you to have come out."

"I do not know, Bruno. I did not notice it, and it was quite indifferent to me; for, as I told you, I wished to say good-bye to you and your mother, and—I wished before doing so to answer a question

which till now I have had no opportunity of answering."

Bruno looked up in surprise at these last soft-spoken words uttered by Emmy. But the expression of her face left no doubt in his anxious mind as to her meaning.

"O Emmy!" It was with half a sigh and half a sob that he pronounced her name in a tone of despair, whilst he hid his face in his hands. But a moment afterwards Emmy was by his side; she threw her arms round his neck, and laid her head on his shoulder.

"Bruno," she whispered, "I love you with my whole heart and soul; I shall never love any one but you. Why do you speak to me so coldly? Do you think that I love you less because you are unfortunate? Do you think it was your money or your name that I loved? O Bruno, what have I done to deserve that you should think this of me?"

But Bruno did not answer; tears dropped through his fingers, and suppressed sobs shook his whole frame.

When he could speak, he said, gently reproaching her: "Emmy, why did you come to make the struggle which I have to go through so hard?"

"Bruno, did you not tell me, on the evening of the ball, that you loved me? Have I so misunderstood that?"

"No, Emmy, but when I said that to you I had a right to say it; then it was an unstained name that I had to offer you; then there was no impossible future to be looked forward to. Emmy, we must both forget what I said to you on that fatal evening. The deep abyss of disgrace is between the past and to-day. But I thank you for having spoken a good word to me; it is a balm which you have laid on the deep wounds inflicted on me; it will be a sweet recollection of my country which I shall take away with me to the other side of the ocean. I thank you,

Emmy." Passionately he kissed her hand, which still lay in his.

"No, Bruno, I will not forget what took place between us on that evening. What has happened to you in the mean time is not sufficient to cause any change in me. You then asked me whether I would be your wife, and what I could not say that evening I say now; yes, and with all my heart."

"Emmy, do you know that it is the son of a criminal to whom you say these words?"

"And what of that, Bruno? Can the son help the misdeeds of the father?"

"O Emmy! You know too little of the world if you think that it will accept that as an excuse."

"What matters it to me what the world thinks or says, when I know that its judgment is unjust?"

"The world, that is to say, not merely indifferent persons, but your own acquaintances and friends, your parents and nearest relations, Emmy! What answer do you think your father would give me if I made a proposal to him for your hand?"

Emmy hesitated for an instant. The words of her step-mother,—"It would be little honorable for us for our name to be coupled with that of the son of a criminal"—sounded in her ears; but at this moment they made her feel even more rebellious than when they were addressed to her.

"I do not know what papa would say, Bruno, and besides it is indifferent to me, for you naturally could not ask him now; but what he will say when after a few years you have secured a good position in America by industry and perseverance, concerns us much more. I have had opportunities of thinking all this over very seriously. Do not think that I have deceived myself as to the importance of the grievous history of your poor father in relation to our future; I see well enough that we shall have to

contend with difficulties and prejudices which in former circumstances would not have presented themselves. But shall that frighten us, Bruno? Shall we on that account sacrifice our happiness and our love? See, I have considered and weighed this all over thoroughly. I am aware, in the first place, that what has been said and settled between us to-day must remain a secret from every one, even from our nearest relations. I am aware that we must have much strength, much courage, and an unbounded confidence in each other, to struggle through the years which lie before us until our union is possible. But I feel this strength and courage in myself, and I will joyfully give you my word that I shall be prepared to follow you whenever your circumstances permit you to come and fetch me."

Up to this time Bruno had remained sitting in the same position as he was when Emmy had gone to stand by him. Now that she was silent he came to his senses, sprang up, and walked two or three times up and down the room; then suddenly standing still before Emmy, he said in an impassioned tone:

"O Emmy, do not make the temptation too great for me. I may not, I cannot, accept your magnanimous proposition. I should be ashamed of myself if I could make a bad use of this noble impulse of your heart. No, Emmy, with my stained name I cannot say to any woman, 'Be mine.' I will not expose any one, and least of all yourself, to the contempt and prejudices of the world. I must not; I ought not."

Overcome with emotion, Bruno turned away from her; but Emmy remained calm, although her face was deadly pale, and tears glistened in her soft blue eyes.

"Bruno," she said, going up to him and placing her hand on his arm, "I have but one question to put to you, which you must answer truly. Won't you?"

Bruno looked at her in some surprise;

but as he did not speak, she proceeded:—

"Suppose, Bruno, that what has happened to your father had happened to mine; that the misfortune had fallen on our family; that it was we who were plunged in sorrow, and that it was our name which was named with dishonor—what should you have done then, Bruno? Should you have come to me to say that all intercourse between us must be broken off; that we must forget what had passed between us; that your name was too good to be connected with mine? Say, Bruno, would you have done this?"

Bruno gave no answer; but he wrung his hands, and his countenance betrayed the inward struggle of his soul.

"You do not answer, Bruno. Now, then, I will tell you what you would have done. You would have come to me to assure me that I was as dear to you as before; you would have taken me to your home as your wife in spite of all opinions and prejudices. That is what you would have done, Bruno. And do you know what I should have done? I should not have been too proud to receive from you what your love offered me. I should have thought that my love would make you so happy that the contempt of the world would have found no vacant spot in your heart. I should have thanked God for the faithful heart that still remained to me, although everything else which had made my life worth having, had been shipwrecked in the storm which had overtaken me."

When Emmy was silent, Bruno slowly raised his eyes, which had been fixed on the ground, towards her. "Emmy," he said, in a voice of deep emotion, "God bless you for these words. No, I am not too proud to receive the free gift of your love. It was not pride or ingratitude which made me speak as I have done; but the conviction that I should be doing you a great wrong in binding up your lot with mine. You cannot take away that

conviction from me; but, Heaven forgive me, the temptation is too great. You are come to me in this fearful hour as an angel of consolation, and I have neither the courage nor the strength to put away from me the dazzling treasure of your love which you place before me. The strength which I thought I had has departed from me. I know nothing more, I feel nothing more, than that you are inexpressibly dear to me—that I cannot part from you without the hope of seeing you again, and some day calling you my own. But I must not accept the sacrifice you would offer me, without putting to you the serious question whether you have weighed the greatness of your sacrifice—whether you know that for my sake you must forsake your country, your father, your relations and friends, and follow me into a strange land?"

"I know that, Bruno," said Emmy, in a firm tone; "but I also know that we shall be happier on the other side of the ocean than we are here, where there are so many painful recollections for you; that I am not so very necessary or useful to any one here but that I could go away without leaving a void which would not easily be filled up. My father has his wife—my stepmother her children; Otto and Elizabeth will, before long, form other ties beside their affection for their sister. I have been too long away from my own home for it to be much to me or I to it; at least, I cannot be half as much to any one here as I could be to you out there; and therefore, dear Bruno, do not call that a sacrifice which the full conviction of my heart places before my eyes as my happiness. In America a new life lies before us, and I look forward to it without fear. If I could but go with you immediately, and support you by the strength of my love in the trials and difficulties which you are sure to meet with, I should have nothing to wish for; but however that may be, I can do nothing but hope and watch and

pray for you. But let it be with a good courage that we part now. We are both young, and a long life of happiness still lies before us, whenever we shall have earned it with many years of patient waiting. See, Bruno, we must both try to meet this time of trial cheerfully; let us bow our heads to adversity, strong in our love, strong in our trust in God!"

Emmy spoke these words with fire, and they seemed to find an echo in Bruno's heart; and his strength of mind, borne down for a time by misfortune, was restored again.

"Yes, Emmy," he exclaimed, "I shall make myself worthy of your love. With that object before my eyes—to call you my own—no labor shall be too severe or too difficult for me. I will force from the world by my conduct that respect which they would otherwise withhold from the son of a criminal. I shall prepare with my love a home for you which shall make you so happy that you will forget that it is a name stained with shame that I bring to you—that you will forget what you have sacrificed for my sake. I know not how long it will take to accomplish this, but the day will dawn when I shall remind you of the words which you have now spoken, and which are the comfort and hope of my life."

"And then I will make good my words, Bruno. You shall then go back to America with your mother and myself, and together we will try to make her happy again, and to make her forget by our love the sufferings of this time. But we must now part, Bruno. I cannot stay longer. Farewell!"

She put out both her hands to him, but Bruno took her in his arms and imprinted the first kiss of love on her lips.

"Must we part already, Emmy?" he said, sorrowfully. "May I not see you this evening when I come to take leave?"

"No, Bruno," Emmy answered. "I cannot take leave of you before all the

family. Here I will say farewell—farewell till we meet again."

She smiled through her tears.

"And during all the years which perhaps may pass before we see each other again, shall I hear nothing of you, Emmy? May I not sometimes write to you, as I might have done to my old playfellow?"

Emmy thought for a few moments; then she said: "Why not, Bruno? It seems to me that no one could find anything unbecoming in it. Write to me after your arrival in New York, and then once every year; but your letters must contain nothing which may not be read by every one. Whether I shall be able to answer them, I do not know; I will if I may and can, but you must not count upon it. Your letter will each year keep me informed as to how your plans are advancing, and between the written words I shall read the unwritten ones, that you love me and do not forget me."

"Forget you, Emmy!" said Bruno, looking at her reproachfully.

When Emmy tried to tear herself from him, that she might depart, he still held her back.

"Emmy," he asked, "give me something as a recollection of this moment, something which may serve as a proof that this is not merely a beautiful dream."

Emmy took off one of the three rings which she wore and gave it to him. "This ring belonged to my mother, Bruno, and therefore it is of great value to me, and I can only give it to you to take care of in the expectation that I may exchange it with you for another. I give you this ring in pledge, with a safe conscience that mamma, who was so fond of you, would approve of the use I make of it. And now, God bless you. Do not come down-stairs with me. I will only give your mother a farewell kiss, and then go home. Farewell!"

One last embrace, and they parted without another word, tears in their eyes, but

their young hearts full of courage such as youth alone can feel, with its unbounded confidence in the future.

As Emmy had said to Bruno, her parting with Mrs. Eversberg was little more than a hearty embrace; then she hastened homewards, if possible in greater alarm than when she came out. When she reached home she was not a little surprised at the chance by which she found the house-door open, inasmuch as Mrs. Welters would have reckoned this so great a piece of misconduct that not only the whole family but all the servants would have most carefully avoided it; but as has been said before, the door stood open, and nothing was easier for Emmy than to enter unobserved, and as no one was in the passage, to go upstairs and reach her own room equally unobserved, two hours after she had left it.

She had scarcely opened the door of her room, when Elizabeth sprang up from her chair and rushed towards her, hastily exclaiming, "Did you find the door open? did no one see you, Emmy?"

She looked at Elizabeth with some surprise as she answered these questions.

But Elizabeth clapped her hands, and in her delight gave a spring into the air such as a rope-dancer could hardly have excelled.

"Oh, I am so glad," she said; "now no one will know that you have been out. Fie, Emmy! how naughty of you to run off without saying a word to me. When I came up-stairs and did not find you, I saw directly by the open wardrobe that the bird had flown, and I did not know whether to be more angry with you or afraid of mamma. And only think, Emmy, you had hardly been away half an hour when I heard Mina in her bed-room, and in order that she might not think it odd that all was so still here, I took up a book and began to read aloud. It quite answered; Mina would certainly not disturb us children in our reading, and she

went down-stairs without coming in. But stop ; the most difficult part is coming. You know that you are still on the sick list for port wine, and at about two o'clock mamma called out to me on the stairs to come and fetch a glass of wine for you. O Emmy, I hardly knew what to do ; first I gave vent to my feelings by abusing you,— well, then I went down-stairs for the wine, and I set the door open as I passed, and now I was just engaged in tasting your wine to restore my spirits, and you may think yourself lucky that you did not give me time to drink it all up."

Whether Elizabeth's narrative was ended, or whether her flood of words required her to take breath, I do not know, but the serious expression of Emmy's face might well have stopped her.

"Well, Emmy," she said, half crossly and half afraid, "you are not going to end by telling me that I have done wrong."

"I fear you have, dear Elizabeth," answered Emmy, kissing her; "or properly speaking, I have done wrong in not telling you what was my intention, although I did so purposely to take away all responsibility from you. I am not the less grateful to you for your kindness and readiness to help me, but I can make no use of it. I told you yesterday that I must go to the Eversbergs, notwithstanding mamma's express wish that I should not do so, and I should be telling an untruth if I were to say that I repent of having done so. On the contrary, Elizabeth, I would not for anything in the world have foregone my visit, and I would go again if a similar occasion should arise. But I must not flinch from the consequences. I must myself tell mamma of my disobedience before she hears of it from any one else ; but be at ease yourself, for I shall at once say that you knew nothing of it before, and when I was out you did not wish to betray me."

"But, Emmy," said Elizabeth, in a cross tone, "how foolish ! no one saw you, and no one can tell of you."

"It is not the less my duty to confess it, dear Elizabeth. I could not rest, and I could not look mamma in the face, if I did not tell her ; she has, moreover, much to forgive me."

"Stuff, Emmy ! It is quite time to confess when you are detected. My motto is—'What the eye sees not, the heart grieves not.' Don't be foolish, and at least sleep over the matter one night. And now, look at my dress, which came home while you were away." And holding up her dress in front, she made a deep curtsey to Emmy, with the words, "Miss Welters, I have the honor to present to you Miss de Graaf."

But neither the seriousness nor the banter of Elizabeth could make Emmy waver in what she considered her duty. Taking off her cloak and hat, she went down-stairs with a beating heart to look for Mrs. Welters.

She hoped to find her alone, and was disappointed when she found Mina with her work sitting in the drawing-room, and also William, who seemed to have just come in.

Emmy had seen but little of William since the evening of the ball. Like the other members of the family, he had once come up-stairs, when she was beginning to sit up ; but he stayed a very short time, and spoke hardly at all to her.

Now, however, when she came so unexpectedly into the room, he went up to her with a friendly expression on his face, placed a chair for her by the table where Mina and Mrs. Welters were sitting, and said a few words, which Emmy not only did not answer, but in the confusion of preparing to confess her fault did not clearly understand.

"So, Emmy, '*already* down-stairs !' said Mrs. Welters, laying a sharp stress on

the word "already," so that Emmy almost lost courage to say what she wanted.

But after a moment's hesitation, she remained firm to her purpose, and not sitting down, but leaning against the chair which William had placed for her, she said, gently :

"Mamma, I am come down-stairs to say something to you. I have not been able to do as you wished, and I have been to the foundry to take leave of Mrs. Eversburg and Bruno. I told you yesterday that I could not find rest or peace if at such a time I should show myself heartless towards these old friends, and I therefore went there, although it gave me pain to act against your wishes. I hope, mamma, you will forgive me, and put my obedience to some other test, and I am sure I shall not fall short in it."

Emmy now ventured for the first time to raise her eyes to Mrs. Welters, and was terrified at the wrathful expression on a face ordinarily so calm ; but Mrs. Welters did not lose her calmness of manner. She rose from the sofa where she had been sitting when Emmy was silent, and seemed to require a few moments before she could control her anger, and then she said in an ice-cold tone, "May I ask at what time you thought fit to go from here, Emmy?"

"I went out at one o'clock, and I am just come back."

"Did Elizabeth know you were out when she came for some port wine for you?"

Emmy felt like a culprit before a court of justice ; and now that Elizabeth was named, she was still more frightened lest she also should be drawn into the affair.

"Neither Elizabeth nor any one else knew of my intention to go out," she answered, evasively.

"But," Mrs. Welters added, sharply, "I do not ask you for excuses, but for the truth. Did Elizabeth know you were out?"

"She must have concluded that I was

out when she came up-stairs and did not find me there ; but please, mamma, do not be hard upon Elizabeth for not betraying me ; she thought—she wished"—

Here Emmy stammered in her confusion, fearing to implicate Elizabeth, and yet unable to say anything to excuse her in the eyes of her mother without falling short of the truth.

Mrs. Welters did not give her time to recover herself before she again asked :

"Who let you in without my knowing it?"

"No one, mamma ; the door was open when I came back," said Emmy nervously.

"Was the door open? That is strange. Did Elizabeth know anything of that also?"

Before Emmy could answer, she continued : "Enough of this, Emmy ; I perceive that my daughter has been in very bad company of late, and has learnt to deceive her mother. As far as you are concerned, it is now not my wish, but my order, that you should not leave your room for three days. We shall see if you have the courage to defy me this time."

"I did not do it to defy you, mamma," said Emmy, rendered calmer by the stinging words respecting Elizabeth which she knew she had not deserved ; "and I will cheerfully bear any punishment you choose to inflict upon me ; but I must repeat once more that Elizabeth is not to blame."

"May I request you to leave the room and to send Elizabeth to me? I know quite enough, and I desire to be spared all further talk on this subject."

Mrs. Welters pointed with her hand to the door, and Emmy dared not stay any longer. She glanced at Mina and William, who had neither of them taken any part in the conversation. She hoped for some defence of Elizabeth from them, and she wished to ask them for it by word or look before she left the room.

Mina's decidedly kill-joy look as she bent over her work made Emmy turn her eyes beseechingly towards William ; but his face no longer bore any trace of the friendly expression which it had assumed on Emmy's entrance. She had never been so much struck with the likeness between him and his mother as at this moment—the same compressed lips, the same contracted eyebrows, and in his half-closed eyes the same green light which had so disagreeably impressed her at their first meeting. Discouraged and sorrowful Emmy left the room.

She had just before told Elizabeth that she felt no remorse for what she had done, and would not for the world have acted otherwise ; yet as she walked restlessly up and down the room whilst Elizabeth had gone down-stairs by her mother's order, she did feel something like a twinge of conscience.

The thought that Elizabeth, who had acted upon the impulse of her heart, without considering whether her conduct was blameless or not, would have to suffer for an offence for which she herself was properly responsible, disturbed her inexpressibly, and drove away for the moment all other thoughts ; and, in fact, hardly a quarter of an hour passed before Elizabeth came up-stairs with flushed cheeks and red, tearful eyes. On Emmy's exclamation, however, "O Elizabeth, I am so very sorry that you have got into trouble on my account," she only shook her head, saying with a half smile, "Don't vex yourself, Emmy ; I don't mind it at all. It does not annoy me in the least."

But this courageous declaration was belied by the tears which streamed down her cheeks when Emmy kissed her.

Hardly two minutes after, she said, with her old fun :

"There, Emmy, now we are like two naughty school-girls who are punished till they repent of their wickedness. Mamma

ought to have shut us up with bread and water to make the play quite complete. And I wish she had done so, for what vexes me most of all is, that I am no longer to come and sit with you, for I am only sent here to fetch my work and my book, and I must not stay any longer."

"So I cannot help you to dress this evening, as we had settled ?" asked Emmy.

Elizabeth shook her head, and tears again stood in her honest brown eyes.

"That is not necessary," she said, casting a sorrowful look at the blue dress, which was spread out over a chair ; "do you know, Emmy, that I am not to go out this evening ? But it does not make a bit of difference to me. Listen, and you need not begin to cry about it. I shall only think that at the expense of my party I have won for you the pleasure of taking leave of Mrs. Eversberg, and that I reckon is worth twice as much. I shall go to parties often enough in my life ; and you must know, Emmy, that one comfort is, that I shall have a chance of being booked in the *Dilburg Chronicle* as a female Peter Spa, who never saw half her first ball or any of her first soirée."

The incorrigible Elizabeth ! she now laughed through her tears ; but the voice of her mother at the bottom of the stairs made her instantly leave the room, shutting the door behind her, and Emmy was left alone during the rest of the day. Not that being alone was disagreeable to her, with all she had to think over. Yet she felt like a prisoner as the day passed on without any one coming to see her, when all she wanted was brought to her by a servant, and even her father and Otto, who on other days had always come to have a little chat with her, did not make their appearance. This convinced her more and more how wrong she had been in thwarting a will such as that of her stepmother, which was unbounded in its influence in the family.

As long as there was yet time, she kept hoping that some one would come to take Elizabeth's dress, and that her mother would not carry out in earnest the threat of making her remain at home ; but this hope was not realized, and certainly Mrs. Welters could hardly have devised a greater punishment for Emmy, than to deprive Elizabeth of the pleasure which she had been looking forward to.

But Emmy slowly forgot everything else, as her thoughts turned to what had been said between herself and Bruno, and she put out of her head all the sufferings of to-day in thinking over the happy future in the far distance, by the side of which the less agreeable present seemed to her too trivial and unimportant to be worth grieving about.

She thought over what duties would rest with her in the years of waiting for Bruno. She resolved to perform those duties with holy earnestness, in order that she might thus deserve the happiness which she hoped from the future, and as her first duty she set herself the task of winning her step-mother's favor by strict obedience and submission.

Weary with all the various emotions which the day had called forth, she went early to bed. First, she knelt down and offered a fervent prayer to God ; a prayer for blessing and protection for him whom she loved, a prayer for strength and courage and steadfastness for herself also.

Calm and with the confidence of childhood, she laid her head on her pillow ; and when she fell asleep it was with Bruno's name on her lips and his image in her heart.

And now you will think that Emmy naturally dreamt of Bruno, and probably you will expect me to give you a poetical description of her dream—a description with angels and clouds, voices and visions, . . . and I am sorry to disappoint you. But I must tell you what really hap-

pened, and what was more natural. Emmy did not dream of Bruno : she dreamt of an old knife-grinder who every three months honored the Dilburg knives and scissors with a visit, and who she had certainly not thought of at all that day, if ever. And she dreamt that walking by the side of his cart, she went with him into the country ; and that they sat together on the grass, eating the blackberries which grew on the hedge along the dyke.

I ask you, Is it not sad that reality can be so prosaic ?

CHAPTER XI.

A WAVERING HEART.

I AM always bringing you back to the great market-place in Dilburg, worthy reader. This is not so much my fault as that of the town itself, where you can walk but a little way without coming straight upon one part or another of the said market-place. This time we will direct our steps to an old-fashioned house at the corner of Still Street, where a copper-plate on the door informs you that part of it, if not the whole, is inhabited by "Mr. Welters, Advocate."

The house was let on lease to the headmaster of the town school, Master Geele, who, in an ingenious manner, had contrived to accommodate, on the ground floor, in three rooms of very modest dimensions, not only his wife and seven children, but also a gigantic bureau, which had been handed down as an heirloom through three generations of Master Geelles.

Originally, Master Geele had occupied the whole house, when he and his young wife, coming home from the town-hall and church, had entered it as a happy couple ; but the little Geelings, who soon made their appearance in the world, and whose numbers, annually increasing, required an extra place at the dinner-table each year for one more hungry stomach, had gradu-

ally made an addition of income not only desirable, but essential. So by degrees, and contrary to what is usually thought fitting, in proportion as Master Geele's family increased, his house in inverse proportion became smaller ; room after room had been offered up to the growing wants of the family, till the sacrifice reached its limits by the Geeles giving up to Otto Welters the whole of the first floor, consisting of three spacious apartments, opening into each other, with the additional advantage of being waited on by the little Geeles, and of being supplied by Mrs. Geele with hot water for tea.

The three rooms occupied by Otto—bedroom, sitting-room and office—fully deserved the good repute they had among his acquaintance ; especially the sitting-room, which, with its three windows looking on to the market-place, might be called perfection. It was a large, cheerful room, in which comfort and good taste seemed to vie with each other in making it agreeable. Fine prints and drawings adorned the walls; a book-case, filled with costly editions, a writing-table with papers spread on it, easy chairs in all the nicest places by the windows or the fireside, and a rest-inviting sofa ; these are some of the things that I recollect about the room, which, I believe, would have satisfied the highest possible demands of any bachelor.

Yet it was in no pleasurable mood that Otto was now sitting as we find him in his pretty room. His eyes were gazing out into the great market-place with the fixed look of a man who, absorbed with the pictures that are passing before his mind's eye, does not remark what his bodily eyes are beholding ; and with his cigar gone out, and his book fallen from his hands, he might be strictly described as in a brown study.

It is indisputable that there are men whose lives glide on like a gently flowing brook over a bed of pebbles ; it is so pleas-

ant to flow over the bed onwards, no sharp points, no rough stones, no hindrances or opposition of any kind ; calm in itself, producing calm in others. But the brook flows on till great stones, standing athwart the stream, suddenly obstruct its course—till a tree, torn up by the roots unexpectedly encumbers it—till a projecting rock arrests and divides the current—till the descent causes a waterfall, and the calm, murmuring brook is changed into a foaming cataract, which rushes down with a thundering noise. This image is applicable to Otto Welters.

When he reflected on his life as it had been a few months before, it was like the calm flowing river ; at peace with himself, at peace with the world ; his path of life, his aim in life plainly marked out before him ; seeking for good and doing good, and convinced that the smooth bed would continue to the end. And now obstacles had come ; passion had troubled the calm of his soul, and the wild fierce storm of conflict in his heart raged like the foaming waterfall. He, who had felt so strong, so sure of himself, had come to the conviction of his own weakness—weakness which a short time before, he so despised in others. He loved, but not her to whom he was betrothed ; the image which occupied his whole soul was not the image of her whose love he had sought and won. Poor weak Otto ! he had wrestled and striven. Day after day he had admitted to himself how far Celine Arnold fell short when he compared her with Mary van Stein. He had compelled himself to be more and more with Mary—less and less with Celine. When at Mary's side, he had tried to force himself to forget the dark eyes, and all in vain ; the crisis had come.

The pictures which we conjecture to be passing before his mind, as he sat lost in thought at the window, were all scenes in which Celine played the principal part. All the hours he had spent with her passed

before him as in a panorama in this one hour of approaching separation ; for that such it must be, had ripened into a fixed resolution on the part of Otto.

He might have been unfortunate in this that he had so little understood his own heart, and that he had imagined the feeling which attached him to Mary van Stein to be love : but he would stand to his word, whatever it might cost him. He would endeavor to make Mary happy, as happy as he could, and she should never doubt that she had all he could give, except his love, which she had never possessed ; that, alas ! he now knew too well.

He alone should be the victim of his mistake. No one should ever say of him that he had played with the love of such a noble girl as Mary. He would save his self-respect from the shipwreck of his principles.

The very next day Mr. van Stein and Mary were to start for Montpellier, in order to avoid the severity of the winter in Holland ; and, before they left, Otto wished to settle with his uncle as to the hiring of the house, which, on the following summer, was to receive Mary van Stein and himself as a newly-married pair.

How often during the last few days he had wished to do this ! Every day he had come to the house intending to do it, and yet every day it was as if he were tied to his chair ; his tongue had refused to serve him, and his heart had obstinately opposed what his reason bade him do.

And now the last evening before their departure had come, and he tried to resist with all his might the meanness and cowardice of a further delay.

One hour more, however, still remained to him which he could devote to comfortless thoughts on the chosen of his heart, who could never be anything to him, and who could never even know how much she was to him. In this last hour, before, urged by his sense of duty, he should go

forth to seal his fate, he thought over every meeting with Celine in all the vivid coloring of an ineffaceable memory.

He thought of her as he had first seen her, standing in the doorway of her father's room, in her close-fitting riding habit ; he thought of her on the evening when, singing and playing to him, she had lured away his heart by the richness of her tones. He thought of that September morning when he had accompanied her and her father out hunting, and she had ridden on her beautiful horse through the woods, leaping over hedges and ditches for the mere fun of it (while he and her father preferred a longer and safer route), and greeting them with her clear ringing laugh each time she rejoined them. He thought, too, of the morning of the Eversberg's ball which he had told her of, when with sparkling eyes she had exclaimed, "I would give anything to go there, Otto, and to dance with you," and when she had obliged her father to sit down and play a waltz, and, like a wilful merry child, had danced round and round the room with the too ready Otto for more than half an hour. . . .

But there were certain other things which Otto might have recollected, and which seemed to have escaped his memory in a wonderful way. For instance, certain changes in her temper and humor, a few sharp slaps administered to the Javanese maid with her prettily-shaped hand in Otto's presence, her assertion of her will in everything, very unbecoming answers addressed to her father on the smallest opposition to her wishes, inscrutable changes in her behavior to Otto, sometimes gentle and cordial with a *naïveté* almost childish, sometimes proud and defiant and cruel, and always changing from a happy, careless mood, to silent, melancholy languor, without the smallest apparent reason. But it was just this changeableness, the uncertainty as to the reception he should meet with, the irresistible charm of her fits of

goodness and agreeableness, the excitement even of her unkind and spiteful moments, which had made such a deep impression upon the calm, equable, good-humored Otto. All these seemed to him to suit Celine's individuality so completely, that he could not think of her, indeed he would have admired her far less, with the calm dignity which had attracted him in Mary. Indeed, in his present excited frame of mind, there was something in Mary's calm, equable temperament which oppressed and irritated him.

And then—though Otto felt ashamed that this reason should have such undue weight with him—he still could not deny that he was carried away by the incomparable beauty of Celine ; beautiful in all her various moods, with the soft melancholy expression which sometimes overshadowed her face ; beautiful also with her eyes flashing with anger, and the heightened flush of passion ; but more beautiful still in the *abandon* of her light-heartedness, which now and then made her dark eyes sparkle and spread over her countenance an expression of almost childlike joy.

And Mary ?

With a blush of shame Otto broke loose from these meditations. Why these comparisons ? Wherefore these tormenting thoughts and recollections ? Mary was his betrothed, the future companion of his life, whom he had voluntarily chosen, and who at all events he could not think of but with the utmost respect, which she well deserved.

Moreover, were he free, what security had he that Celine Arnold would ever be anything more to him than she was at present ?

Had he ever been able to perceive any sign on her part that her feeling towards him was anything more than a passing inclination for a pleasant acquaintance ? Was there anything in the unreserved tone in which she often spoke to him which at the

most could be regarded as a token of any greater inclination ?

Otto reminded himself at that moment of one trifling incident among others—of how he had once let fall that there was something unfeminine in a woman smoking, which grated against his feelings ; and how from that time forth he had never been at Beckley without seeing Celine smoke a cigar, and at times when he knew she had not previously been in the habit of doing so. Besides that, she had never sung again a song which on one occasion he had praised as especially pretty and to his taste ; in short, neither by word nor deed had she ever shown him anything but indifference. Yes, that was the real word, thought Otto. She was indifferent to him—that was the final result of all his reflections—she was indifferent to him, and it was better so ; it would make it easier for him to fulfil his duty to Mary.

And yet, when he thought of the happy mortal who would some day call Celine his own, the happy man whom she would love !

“ O kennt ich nur den glücklichen Mann,
O dass ich ihn nur finde
So recht allein im grünen Wald,
Sein Glück hatt 'bald ein Ende "....

These words of Heine, as they escaped Otto's lips at the last reflection, brought him back, however, from his dreams to reality.

And yet, if he were but free !—Springing from his chair, he passed his hand over his forehead as if he would drive away all thoughts which made him waver and hesitate in doing his duty. A few moments later he was on his way to Mr. Van Stein's house.

There was an unusual bustle in the sitting-room when Otto entered, owing to the preparations for the journey which was at hand. Bending over a large trunk, Mary was packing, under her father's directions, the necessaries which he could not dispense with till the last evening, although it would

certainly have been far more agreeable to Mary not to have had to put off all these arrangements till the last.

"Remember my foot-warmer, Mary; and don't forget the milk tester, that at least I may know whether I have sour milk in my stomach. Put in my own drinking glass; without it I shall not be able to measure the quantity of water I drink, and I may take too much. For Heaven's sake don't forget the Scott's pills, and the cushion for my back and the sleeping powders, Mary."

"All packed up, dear papa," said Mary; and between all these questions, and with her hands full of business, she could only bid Otto welcome with a friendly nod as he entered.

"Packed up! No, I don't believe it, Mary, for I must have seen it; I was sitting by all the while, and it would have been extraordinary if I had missed seeing it. Yes; I understand it all well enough—you say it only to put me off; and it is just the same to you, it won't prevent you from sleeping."

"Hush, papa, dear! they are packed; but I will get them out again in order to convince you; it is not much trouble."

Mary patiently took out of the trunk all the things packed above them. Otto stood by, with folded arms, silent, but in his heart angry. Struck, as he had often been before, by Mary's unhappy lot, his compassion for her now was stronger than ever—yet this time he also began to feel cross with her. As Mary stood stooping over the trunk, patiently repacking, to pacify the sickly ill-humor of her father, without a shade of annoyance or impatience on her face, Otto asked himself whether this goodness of heart which he had so much admired in her could possibly arise from a want of character. But this thought no soon occurred to him than he felt ashamed of it; and when the unfortunate sleeping powders were found and re-

packed with the other things, Otto took advantage of the opportunity when Mary was sent up-stairs to fetch something, to sit down unexpectedly close to Mr. van Stein, and to proceed with his object without any preparation.

"Uncle, I wish very much to speak to you about Mary."

"To speak about Mary!" said Uncle van Stein, making a face as if a toothache were now added to his other torments. "I thought we had talked the matter out about Mary last time. You must not trouble me this evening, Otto. Remember that to-morrow I must set off on my journey, and if I excite myself I certainly shall not sleep; indeed I have not much chance of that anyhow, for Mary has packed up my woollen night-cap, and she knows I cannot sleep in the thin one; but that is just like her, she always thinks most of herself, and her invalid father is only an incumbrance."

Otto waited patiently for the end of this new complaint; and as soon as his uncle was silent, he proceeded with the matter he wished to accomplish.

"When I last spoke to you about Mary, uncle, neither of us then had the little legacies from Aunt Emmy, which we could not apply better than in setting up house-keeping. I can rely on my business and on the means I possess to maintain ourselves comfortably, so that a longer indefinite postponement of our marriage is unnecessary. Last week it came to my knowledge that Mr. Stork is about to leave the town, and next May his house will be to let. I have already asked for the refusal of it, and I hope you will agree with me that I should take a lease of it, and that in the summer when Mary returns with you from Montpellier"—

Otto had proceeded thus far, when he felt a hand placed on his shoulder, and, turning round, he beheld Mary's face, from which all color had vanished. It seemed

as if for a moment it cost her much to speak, as if her lips refused to utter the words which hung upon them ; but that with a great effort of will she was able to overcome this momentary feeling ; and if her face had not been so pale and agitated, one would not have remarked anything particular from the tone in which she spoke.

"Otto," she said, "you must not trouble papa on this subject to-night. We must be up early to-morrow, and papa must begin his journey after a calm, quiet night. What you wish to say can just as well be written. Take leave of him now, if you like, for I want to speak to you myself."

Otto obeyed her involuntarily. He got up and said a few words to his uncle, the substance of which was that he intended to see him again at the station. Mary was waiting for him at the door with a light ; he followed her in silence down the passage to a little room opening into the garden. They entered this room, which was lighted by a small lamp. In silence Mary set down the candle, and, as she did so, Otto saw plainly that her hand trembled.

A strange feeling of annoyance and ill-humor had come over Otto at Mary's interruption. The tone of voice in which he broke the silence was not what she was accustomed to hear from him.

"What is the meaning of this, Mary, that you forbid me to speak to your father ? How am I to understand it ? Are you displeased because I did not first talk it over with you ? You know well that it is of no use for us to speak to each other about it until we have your father's approval ; and I am sure that, but for your strange, inexplicable interference, he would now have given his consent."

Otto was silent after saying this, evidently expecting Mary's answer ; but she, with her hand resting on the table, stood silent

and motionless opposite him. He was still more put out of temper by her strange behavior, of which he in vain sought the key. It had been with much self-conquest, and urged on by the force of his feelings of duty and honor, that he had compelled himself to speak to her father ; and here it was Mary herself—Mary, for whose happiness he was ready to sacrifice his own—who hindered him.

"How is it, Mary?" he began again. "Perhaps what I offer you may not appear enough ? It is true the house is but small, and our income will at first be somewhat limited ; but I thought that your desires were moderate, and that it would be enough for you."

"No, Otto, it is not enough for me."

Calm and deliberately these words were uttered ; proudly she raised her head, and her eyes, which till now had wandered round the room, rested upon Otto with an indescribable expression of goodness and sorrow.

"No, it is not enough for me," she repeated ; "the small house, the still more limited income, would not deter me ; but I wish for and require the undivided heart of the man with whom I must share them, and that you cannot offer me, Otto."

Alarmed and perplexed at these unexpected words, Otto stammered out, "I do not understand you, Mary."

"Do not say that, Otto," interposed Mary, who had now become perfectly calm ; "let there be truth between us. If you yourself find it difficult to speak out, let it be for me to say what ought to be said. Tell me, Otto, have you really thought that I did not observe what was passing in you—that I did not know how your heart had been turned away from me—how another possessed your love, which by a mistake you thought belonged to me ? Believe me, I have known and understood it all. I have seen the struggle which it has cost you, and I have inwardly pitied you, Otto."

For many weeks past I have resolved to give you back your liberty ; but I wished, as it would have been more agreeable for us both, to have written to you from Montpellier. Your conversation with papa, however, has hastened the necessity of this. So let us part in peace and friendship ; I can never be more to you than a sincere and interested friend, but also not less ; of that you may be confident."

She offered him her hand, but Otto dared not take it. He was overpowered with indescribable feelings of alarm and shame, and his confusion was such that it was impossible for him to speak.

"Mary," he said at last, in a voice of deep emotion, "my heart may have wandered from you for a short time ; I cannot deny that ; but I swear to you that you have no cause for jealousy, and that I have never spoken a word to any woman which I could not repeat in your presence."

"That I know, Otto. It was not any doubt of your uprightness and honor which was the cause of my determination. I know that had I agreed to the hiring of the house for us, I should have had nothing to fear in my absence, from Celine Arnold. I know that, with her image in your heart, your word once given would have stood firm, and that even without your love I should not have had to complain of you. But once more, I repeat to you, Otto, this is not enough for me. I know of no middle course in this respect. I will have all or none. I can give you up now because my reason tells me that it must be so ; but to become your wife with the conviction that your love belongs to another, Otto, that I cannot, and what's more, I will not do."

How strange these words, uttered in a passionate accent, sounded to Otto ; how strange from the lips of her whom he had never known otherwise than calm and gentle, whose goodness he had ascribed a few minutes before to want of character.

There he stood, before Mary, silenced and confounded. Painfully the consciousness forced itself upon him that he had lost a noble and magnanimous heart. Sinking down into a chair, he covered his face with his hands, and at last so far controlled his agitation as to be able to speak.

"Mary," he whispered, "you must indeed despise me deeply to thrust me away from you thus. I know that I have forfeited my right to alter your determination. I only ask you : decide nothing to-day, and give me the winter to learn to know thoroughly my own heart."

She shook her head with a sorrowful expression on her face. "No, Otto, you must not do violence to your heart on my account. Employ the winter in seeking for the love to which your heart is attracted. Let that word be never more pronounced between us. It was a delusion which entangled both of us. Let us be thankful that we have waked up from it before it was too late."

"And what if you are mistaken, Mary—if all this is the phantom of your imagination—if I have never loved Celine as you suppose ?"

Long and earnestly Mary gazed at Otto with a searching look, whilst a deep blush colored her cheeks. Perhaps it was a flickering of hope which thus so greatly affected her, but certainly it was a feeling of guilt which made Otto turn away his eyes ; and when he raised them again to her, she stood before him as calm and as pale as at first.

"You do love her, Otto ; do not mislead yourself. Win her love ; be happy with her, and think of me as a sister, who wishes you well with all her heart. Forget that you ever thought we could be anything else to each other."

"And you, Mary"—Hesitating and after an interval of silence, he faltered out these words. Oh, that he could have said to her with a pure conscience : "I love you ; you

are necessary to my happiness." But even at this critical moment he could not say that which in the present state of feeling of his heart would have been a lie ; he could not feign before those honorable, truthful eyes, which pierced the very depths of his soul ; he could only utter the words which at the moment pressed like lead upon his heart : " And you, Mary ? "

" My way lies marked out before me : have no anxiety as to that, Otto. In my old helpless father God has laid upon me my task in this world ; and is, perhaps, punishing me for wishing to set it aside. He knows what is good for me better than I do, and whosoever trusts in Him shall not be ashamed. Do not these words of comfort stand written : ' All things work together for good to them that love God ? '

So calm, so composed, she stood before him, that again the same effect was produced upon him by this outward calmness, as had latterly so often been the case. Springing from his chair, he said in a bitter tone, " Mary, is it possible you can have loved me, and can part from me so calmly ? With your Christian submission is there not mixed a good deal of indifference, which makes you acquiesce in our separation without difficulty ? "

Again a deep blush colored Mary's pale cheeks, as if she were in pain. She pressed her clasped hands to her breast, but no word of complaint or of the reproaches which filled her heart at Otto's question came from her colorless, trembling lips.

It seemed, however, that some moments were necessary to her before she could command her voice sufficiently to speak.

" Papa is waiting for me to help him into bed, Otto ; I cannot stay with you any longer. Farewell. May you be happy."

But the moment of silence which followed Otto's question had been enough to bring him to the consciousness of his injustice.

Her hand, which she held out to him, he took between his, and he gazed once more, with a pained expression, on the friendly, soft face, and, deeply affected, he whispered, " God bless you, Mary ; forgive me." Then she accompanied him along the passage as she had done all these months after his evening visits. Whether from habit or by design, she put her hand through his arm as usual, and so they went in silence together to the outer door.

" May I come to-morrow to the train to wish you good-bye, Mary ? "

" Do as your heart inclines you, Otto. Farewell."

Once more she put out her hand to him, and he dared not—no, he dared not embrace her.

Slowly, hesitatingly, he let go her hand. Tears started into his eyes as she closed the door behind him.—It was over !

Over ! And this also was the word which sounded like a knell in Mary's bosom. Over ! She shut and chained up the door, as she had done every evening at Otto's departure, but slowly, hesitatingly, as she had never done before.

She was overcome with an irresistible feeling, as if it were her happiness, her hope, her youth, that she had bolted out.

With her ears against the door, she listened to the retreating footsteps of him she loved so much—how much Heaven only knew.

She put down the light, which she had been holding in her trembling hands, and sat down for a moment on the bench in the passage to collect her strength to answer the bell in her father's room, which had rung incessantly since she had shut the door upon Otto.

" So, Mary, you are come at last to lock the trunks and help me into bed. You might as well have put off your chatter with Otto to a more suitable time. There are things to be done now which are much more important than such nonsense."

Mary made no answer to this flood of words ; but taking her father's dressing-gown out of the cupboard, she began the repetition of a very peculiar scene which took place every evening at the desire of Mr. van Stein.

Any one who was ignorant of this custom, on entering the room unexpectedly, would certainly have been much astonished to see Mary walking patiently up and down the room in the dressing-gown for a quarter of an hour, and would probably not have guessed that the garment was made to receive in this way the degree of heat deemed necessary by Mr. van Stein, in order that he might not be seized with that most fearful of all fearful things—a cold.

So she walked up and down the room in the old checked dressing-gown, her face so pale and sad, her heart so full of pain, longing for the moment when she should be alone, but patiently fulfilling her duty with all the strength of her will. When she had helped her father to bed, she still went about the house for some time, putting the last touch to all the preparations for the journey ; and it was already past midnight when, having got everything ready, she at last repaired to her own room.

At last to rest, and at last alone.

But even now it was not in a passionate flood of tears that she sought relief for her pain. Only the fixed look of her eyes denoted that her thoughts were far away from the practical operation of undressing, which she had just commenced.

Nevertheless, before she went to bed, she raised her candle up towards the wall where a portrait in oil, the size of life, presented a beautiful young woman. One would have sought in vain for any resemblance in Mary to this portrait, but yet there was something in the friendly, gentle expression of the face, which reminded one of her.

And in the contemplation of those be-

loved features, two warm tears for the first time rolled down her cheeks. "Mother," she whispered, "it is over. I shall remain to take care of him ; help me, strengthen me with your spirit." Then she slowly put down the candle and bowed her head for a moment as if in prayer. When she raised it again, the expression of her face was entirely changed ; her color had come back, her eyes sparkled, whilst her fingers turned over the leaves of the Bible which lay open on the table before her, and her voice sounded almost cheerful as she read aloud the passage which she seemed to have been searching for : "He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

Mr. van Stein and Mary had set off. Otto had seen their heavily-packed carriage pass by his window just as he had risen from his bed after a restless, sleepless night.

Should he go to the station to take leave of them ? Should he, with his deep feeling of shame, again meet Mary's eyes ? Should he try once more whether her sentence of separation was in earnest ? No, he could not make up his mind to this. Mary had not even looked up to his house from the carriage—no longer thought him worthy of a bow. Could it be true that she had ever loved him as much as he had thought ? Was it, after all, only for a chimera that he had suffered so much ? Could Mary have parted from him so easily if she had really loved him ? How calmly, how composedly had she spoken the last words which parted them ! Was it self-command, the practice of which in her life she had brought to perfection, or was it coolness and indifference ?

Suddenly cutting short these reflections, he hastily seized his coat and hat.

He would still see and speak to Mary ; he would look into the very depths of her soul ; he would know whether the affec-

tion which his conscience warned him he had trifled with really existed ; he would—

The whistle of the departing train sounded as he arrived breathless on the platform. The train was already in motion when he reached it. Peering hastily into the first-class carriages, he discovered the thick great-coat of Uncle van Stein, which covered him up to the chin, whilst Mary was busy adjusting his *cache-nos*.

Otto called out her name ; she let down the window with a sudden effort, and bent forward to wave her hand to him.

Once more their eyes met ; once more Mary gazed at Otto with a gentle, mournful look, with tears in her eyes, while she forced herself to smile. Overwhelmed by the most conflicting emotions, Otto remained for some time without moving on the spot where he had lost sight of the train which bore Mary away.

In his mind, which had been so calm but a few months before, a tumult and discord now prevailed, which made him indescribably unhappy. What yesterday he had thought an impossible piece of good fortune, to be free from all ties, and to have obtained his freedom without saying a single word which his strong sense of honor and justice would have forbidden him to say—this was now an actual fact. Mary was gone, and he was free.

But why did not his heart rejoice, as he thought it would have done ? Why did he gaze at the train that took her away with such an inward feeling of pain ? Why that inexpressible longing to see and speak to her once more ? To go home was at that moment impossible to him ; so leaving the station he went along the broad gravel walk which led out of the town.

He did not heed the rain, which fell in great drops ; he did not feel the chill autumn wind, which blew round his ears and whistled through the trees ; he could only feel the oppression and burden of his

own wavering heart, which had brought upon him all the misery of this struggle. And not on this day of parting only, but on many subsequent days, the most unhappy Otto had ever experienced.

At one time he began a letter to Mary, in which he besought her to forget the past, and to believe that he loved her more than any woman in the world ; but when he got thus far the form of Celine rose up before his imagination as a warning spectre. He then tore the paper into atoms, and gave himself up to a thousand dreams and wishes, in which Mary played no part.

And yet several days passed after Mary's departure before the desire of seeing Celine was again awakened in his mind. It was some weeks since he had paid his last visit to Beckley, and in the mean time information of importance had reached him, which he had every day intended to bring before Mr. Arnold—namely, that the inheritance, which had mainly led to their acquaintance, had fallen through, owing to the discovery of an heir nearer in succession than Mr. Arnold, and that consequently further exertions in inquiry and investigation had become useless.

When Otto entered the gate of Beckley at the same hour as on his first visit, it seemed to him as if years had passed since that day.

It was some relief to him that nature did not now present itself to him in the full summer glow of a June morning ; that the flowers had disappeared ; that the few leaves which had resisted the autumn wind hung yellow and withered on the trees, and might be called solitary compared with the numbers which crackled under his feet, or which the wind blew against him. It was a relief to him that all was different, as he was himself.

With an altered face also Mr. Arnold came to meet Otto as he entered the study. How much older, how much more fallen

away, he appeared since their first meeting, and especially since the last time Otto had spoken to him but a few weeks back. And what a shade of sadness overspread his face, where now there was a settled expression of melancholy, the traces of which Otto had often discerned before. After greeting Mr. Arnold, and excusing himself for having kept away so long, Otto communicated the tidings respecting the inheritance, which appeared to make much less impression on Mr. Arnold than he expected.

"Well, I have done what was my duty to do," he said, calmly; "and if another man has more right to it than I have, I am content. Besides, money is of no consequence to me, and Celine has enough without that. Poor child! she has suffered a greater loss to-day than the prospect of the inheritance."

"Suffered a loss?" asked Otto, with as much interest as surprise.

"I have spoken to you more than once of my friend Van Dalen, have I not, Mr. Welters? A friend of mine and of Celine's in the fullest sense of the word; a friend who promised to be a father to her when I should be no more. Before I left India everything was settled and agreed upon with him and his wife, and I should have tranquilly laid down my head knowing that Celine would have found a home with him. By the last mail I received the news of his death."

Overcome with emotion, Mr Arnold was silent. Otto, having said a few words of sympathy, inquired:

"And his widow—cannot she be a mother to your daughter, although her husband is no longer there to aid her in the task?"

"No, no, that would not do; Celine could not be left to her guidance alone, and I believe that a plan is arranged for her to take up her abode with a married daughter. It is a hard thing for a father,

Welters, not to know what will become of his daughter, for whose happiness he is ready to sacrifice all that he has in the world."

"We must hope, Mr. Arnold," said Otto, warmly, "that the time is farther off than you think when she will require other care than that of her father; but if she has the misfortune to lose you and to be alone, you may be certain that she will find in me all the help and support which it is in my power to give."

Mr. Arnold responded to these evidently well-intended words with a hearty pressure of his hand; but before he could say anything, they were disturbed by loud cries and a noise which, although somewhat diminished by distance, reached the room where they were sitting.

Mr. Arnold sprang up alarmed at the first sound, and Otto followed him as he hastened out of the room and down-stairs, directing his steps to the stables, whence the sound proceeded.

And what a spectacle met their eyes on arriving there! The door stood wide open, and there, in the middle of the stable, was Celine Arnold, standing before her white horse, which, foaming from the mouth, was rearing back wildly. Celine, with a face distorted with passion and her eyes flaming, held with one hand by the collar a stable boy, from whom the screams proceeded, while with the other she beat him with all her might with a thick riding-whip of her father's.

"There! there! there!" she cried, with a harsh voice at each repeated stroke, whilst the servants who had collected stood staring in horror at the scene, but not one of them ventured to interfere.

No one but her father dared even to approach her. He had no sooner entered the stable than the whip was taken out of her hand and thrown into a corner, and the stable boy released.

"For shame, Celine!" He said these

words gently and earnestly, and in a sorrowful tone. Nevertheless her passion was not subdued. With a shrieking voice she stammered out in broken sentences :

" He has beaten Schimmel. I have long been watching him till I caught him in the act, and I have beaten him, and shall beat him again. I'll beat him to death if he ever comes in my way again. He to beat Schimmel, poor defenceless beast ! Then I'll beat *him*, I will—I'll beat him to death ! My poor Schimmel ! "

Now, however, came the reaction of her passion. She turned round suddenly, and throwing her arms round the horse's neck and hiding her head in his long white mane, she burst into passionate sobs, and addressed soft caressing words in Malay to the animal.

And so they left her alone.

The stable boy had immediately taken to flight, the servants went back to the house, Mr. Arnold again retired to his room, whilst Otto went away unobserved, and deeply affected returned to the town.

Was this the girl who had driven Mary out of his heart ? Could a man hope for happiness with a woman who can change into such a fury ? Was such a woman worthy of the love which a man would devote to her as the best feeling of his heart ?

A fresh letter was written that afternoon to Mary and torn up. Poor wavering Otto ! he could not sleep that night owing to the vision which hovered incessantly before his eyes. The vision of Celine in her violent fury and unwomanly act ? No, indeed ; but the recollection of the glowing face, the sparkling dark eyes, the black locks hanging loose and mingled with the white mane of the horse, the caressing words in the soft-sounding, strange language.

The image of the moth and the candle has been too often used and abused to be borrowed here, but it could never have a better application than in the case of Otto Welters.

CHAPTER XII.

A NEW VERSION OF AN OLD SONG.

" My father is ill, Otto ! do come to us again if Beckley is not out of your way.

" CELINE."

This short note reached Otto early one morning, a few days after the visit to Beckley already mentioned, a visit which, after the scene he had witnessed, he had hardly found courage to repeat. He kissed Celine's beautiful handwriting before he locked up the letter in his desk. He felt his heart glow with the thought that it was Celine who was calling him to her, that she felt the want of his presence now that her father was ill, and she was herself, perhaps, in a serious and sorrowful frame of mind.

On this occasion I will for once make use of the hackneyed poetical expression to inform you that Otto forthwith flew on the wings of love to Beckley, and hardly a quarter of an hour after the receipt of Celine's letter he entered the house, or at least intended to enter it, for, as he went up the steps, Celine came out of the door, accompanied by Cæsar.

How sorrowful and careworn she looked ; how cordially she pressed Otto's hand as she greeted him.

" How is your father, Celine ? "

" I fear not at all well, Otto ; I sat up with him last night, and found him feverish and restless."

" May I go to him ? "

" No, not now ; he has just fallen asleep, and I have taken advantage of the opportunity to telegraph to Amsterdam. I hope, therefore, to have the doctor here this evening."

" Why did you not let me sit up with your father, Celine ? You know what a pleasure it would have been to me to be of service to you in any way," said Otto, warmly.

" Yes, that I willingly believe," an-

swered Celine, again putting out her hand to him. "You are our only friend, Otto, and when I want help I will not hesitate to apply to you, but the nursing of my dear father I will hand over to no one."

Great tears glistened in her eyes as she uttered these words in a soft tone.

How lovely, how charming, how entirely feminine she was, as she stood before Otto in her great distress. No wonder he wholly forgot how he had last seen her. No wonder he consented so eagerly when she proposed to him to walk with her, as she wished to take advantage of her father being asleep to get some fresh air out of doors after her sleepless night.

So they walked together in the fir-wood, which clothed the hill behind the house. The unchanging green of the fir-trees and the clear blue sky, which was so bright overhead on this morning, made the advance of the season hardly perceptible. Celine went on, silently sunk in thought, whilst Otto did not venture to disturb her meditations by any commonplace remark, which he thought would be unsuitable to her present serious mood.

Yet he would willingly have interrupted her sad thoughts, and when Celine, having reached the highest point of the hill, sat down upon the seat placed there, he took advantage of the Sunday bells of Dilburg, of which the sound reached them through the stillness of the wood, to begin a conversation with her.

"Do you hear the bells, Celine? Is it with you as with me? Do you not find something solemn, something poetical, in the sound of the church bells, which say to you that it is the Sabbath, the day of the Lord, and which call you to come to church, to lay aside worldly cares for a while and to lift up your soul to the Creator?"

For a moment Celine looked at Otto with surprise before she answered him.

"No, Otto! in that sense the church bells have no sound for me. I like to hear them, as a pleasant melody which charms my ear, but they have no language for me. There is no church which can call me; I belong to none, and I wish to belong to none."

"And why not?" asked Otto, with some astonishment at her decided tone. "Is there no church communion with whose form of worship you could agree? Is there never in you a strongly felt want to hear in any church a serious word of consolation or encouragement? See, Celine—I am a man, and as such, may be thought to attach myself less to these things than women do, whose sentimental life is more developed, from their having less occupation; yet I feel calmer and more contented when I have sought and found an opportunity in church of withdrawing my thoughts from the world to fix them on higher interests."

"And can you only do that in church, Otto?" she asked, with a smile.

"No, Celine. I ought, perhaps, to be able to do so at home, but when I stay at home I cannot manage it, and just on this account I hold that going to church is a good habit. Tell me, is it on principle, or is it a caprice on your part, to avoid belonging to any church?"

"It was a principle of my father's not to make any profession for me in any church communion before I was myself able to determine my own choice by investigation. To him all men—Jews, Christians, Heathen, Catholics, and Protestants—are equal. He calls them all brothers, as children of the same God, participators in the same human nature, and having the same destiny, whether they believe in the name of Mahomet, of Jesus, or of Mary."

"And this destiny is?"—

"To co-operate in the place which each creature fills, with the natural and eternal

laws of origin, life, and annihilation, to succeed the previous generation, and to make way for that which follows. But we are wandering from our subject. I told you, Otto, that my father had not bound me by baptism to any church communion, that he incited me to investigation as soon as he thought my understanding capable of it. He began by sketching for me in a few words the differences and similarities of the different Protestant sects; he then imparted to me the principles of the Catholic religion, in so far as he, a born Protestant, had any knowledge of them. It may, perhaps, seem strange to you when I say that the Catholic Church, in the first instance, had the greatest attraction for me. In the first place, it was the church to which my mother belonged, and in the authority of the Church in confession, and in the forgiveness of sins by penance; yes, in the multitude of protecting saints, and, above all, in the unity of the Catholic Church, there was something that charmed me, and perhaps I should have caused myself to be received into it had I not been thrown into a state of doubt on becoming acquainted with history. When I first heard of the Night of St. Bartholomew, of the doings of the iconoclasts, of the Inquisition, of the burning of Huss and Servetus—in a word, of all the persecutions and cruelties perpetrated by Catholics and Protestants in their fanaticism for the sake of enforcing their own mode of worship—then I hesitated to enrol myself under any banner whatsoever, and gave the preference by far to neutrality."

"But, Celine," said Otto, now smiling in his turn, "these times are long since past; no one would now be brought to the stake on account of his convictions. The war between Catholic and Protestant has long been at an end, and if the different parties have no love for each other, they at least live peaceably side by side, and even the Jew, who was once so persecuted and

ill-treated, now, more and more, takes the place which belongs to him as a man of equal rights. If this is your only difficulty, Celine, it has, indeed, no longer any force."

"The faggots are done away with, do you say, Otto? Oh yes, people no longer burn the heretic, but with the fire of the faggots hate and intolerance are not extinguished. To take a small example, look at the mutual relations of the Reformed Churches. When I first came into this country and heard of the *mick-mack* between orthodox, liberal, modern, or by whatever name this nonsense may be called, which had not penetrated into our Indian solitude, the Protestant religion seemed to me to be like a bunch of nettles, into which I took care not to poke my fingers, and after reading all the *brochures* in which the Christian teachers of different denominations abused each other in very opprobrious terms, each clearly rejoicing in the conviction that the truth dwelt only with himself, the Protestant Church, with all its divisions, appeared to me in so absurd a state that any wish I had to belong to it vanished. The perusal of George Sand's *Mademoiselle la Quintinie* at that time also cured me of my latest inclination for Catholicism. Added to this, when I was at the Hague, I went once into each of these churches. I would not judge as a blind man does of colors. The first I entered was the Protestant church, I believe it called itself "the Reformed Dutch." I cannot tell you what a solemn feeling came over me when I entered a church for the first time, Otto, but I must add that this feeling accompanied me little farther than the threshold. The minister's name was R——, who is sufficiently well known in the country for you to have heard his name more than once. A numerous crowd was pressing to find room. Squeezed, pushed, shoved on one side, I persevered in my undertaking, and by money and good words I obtained a seat opposite the pulpit,

in what, I think, they call a pew. A seat, Otto ! Oh ! I was quite indignant ; there they all sat lolling in their chairs with their feet on a warm stove, so luxurious, so lazy ! . . . In this position I felt ashamed to lift up my thoughts to God, and yet I dared not kneel down, as I wished to do. People crowded into the church more and more ; there was a commotion and bustle ; here some one had to get up to make room for another, and close by me two women fell into a dispute, whilst behind me two young ladies whispered very audibly, and laughed about things which were not fit for a church.

"At last the minister entered the pulpit ; it was quiet now, and I was thankful when his words withdrew my attention from what was passing around me. He spoke of the love of Christ for all sinners, even for His enemies, and of the duty thus laid upon His followers of cherishing love and forgiveness in their hearts. See, Otto, I was touched and carried away by his words. This man in the pulpit, who in so eloquent a manner had tried to excite the consciences of his hearers, I looked upon almost as a holy apostle ; and when he spoke of intolerance and uncharitableness, which were so much at variance with Christian duty, when in a gentle voice he said : 'Let each ask his own conscience, I will be silent.' . . . A solemn silence, which affected me to the very depths of my soul, prevailed in the church. But he then all at once broke this silence by exclaiming in a powerful voice : 'No, I cannot be silent !' and then," (here Celine burst out laughing)—"well, Otto, then unluckily I saw that he turned over a leaf of the paper book in which he had written his sermon the preceding evening in his study, where he had certainly sat and flattened himself by anticipation of the striking effect of this piece of acting ; from that moment I listened with curiosity and amusement, but without any interest or

edification, to the rest of his sermon. From that moment the whole church seemed to me to be a theatre, in which the preacher and the congregation were acting their parts according to prescribed regulations. As soon as the Amen had been spoken, the people pushed and crowded out as if coming away from a theatre, and I then vowed never to assist at such a performance again."

"And then you went to the Romish Church, Celine ?"

"Just so, Otto, but with even less result. At first I was better pleased to find the congregation kneeling, and to see that all could get to their seats without squeezing and pushing ; the beautiful music of the organ affected me ; there was something more calm and more solemn than in the Protestant church, but though my senses were charmed, my heart remained cold, and the sermon of the pastor, so full of Mary, Joseph, and all the saints, as if God were not more than all of them, attracted me but little. After the congregation had left, when I waited for a moment to look at the paintings and sculptures, I saw in a corner of the church a young woman kneeling and sunk in devout prayer before a doll dressed in white satin. I do not say this to scoff, Otto, but in my eyes the Madonna was nothing else, and then I understood in an instant that one must be born and brought up in this religion to be able to see the representation of the Madonna in this doll, and to lift up one's heart to it.

"These, Otto, are my impressions of a church. Do you wonder now that I have no wish to belong to one, and if you do not meet me again some of these days as a Jew or a Mohammedan, I shall remain all my life a heathen, or whatever you may choose to call me, and always continue to prefer the solitude of my own room, or the silent forest out of doors, where the soft moss, the green trees, and the thousand varieties of leaf and tint, where the mur-

muring brook and the songs of the birds speak to me of the Mighty Creator, and where I feel more impelled and more fit to honor God than in the midst of the bustle and confusion of a crowd?"

"I can enter into all this very well, looking at it from your point of view, Celine," answered Otto, who had listened to every word with surprise and attention. It might be that they were strange, extraordinary propositions which she was defending, and with which he could not absolutely agree, yet there was something in the animation with which she spoke when the subject interested her that would have made an impression on any one, were his heart ever so indifferent to her. Her lively gestures, the play of her features, the sparkle of her eyes, her foreign accent, and her manner of pronouncing distinctly every syllable, and this all the more as she became excited, and then, too, the originality of her views, which at all events testified to her clear head and developed train of thought—all these considered, was it wonderful that Otto lost the little coolness of reason which he had thus far maintained in his relations with Celine, and that he let his heart take its full swing in unbounded admiration of her? But he was still sufficiently master of himself to continue the conversation with apparent coolness.

"From your point of view, I can quite enter into this, Celine," he said; "I can understand that one must look at a church with other eyes when at your age one enters it for the first time, than when one has been identified from a child with all its forms and usages. But yet in a certain sense you are unjust. You have overlooked the internal in the external; you have not distinguished the form from the essence. You were angry at the sight of people attending public worship in a sitting posture, but you have not considered that more depends on the disposi-

tion of the heart than on the posture of the body. You allowed yourself to be angry because the minister read his sermon, and you did not reflect that the object of the sermon was to make an impression, and that an extempore preacher may fail to do so by a want of coherence, to which even the most inspired orator is occasionally liable if the sermon is not written down with calm consideration. But if you do not belong to any church, Celine, you must not call yourself a heathen. Should not every one be called a Christian who believes in Christ as our Redeemer?"

"Yes, Otto; but if I did not believe in Christ in the spirit you speak of? If I only loved Him as a remarkable man who, by His self-sacrificing life and the morality which he preached, has well deserved that mankind should still remember Him so many years afterwards, and if I did not believe in any supernatural acts performed by Jesus, or in any miraculous power possessed by Him? And if I set before my eyes His resurrection and ascension only as a fable—what then?

Here I must add that Otto was roughly and disagreeably shaken out of his admiration by these words of Celine. Without any intolerance against heterodox persons, he was himself firmly attached to the ideas imprinted in his mind first by his mother and then by his religious instructors, and, above all, he had been much strengthened in these ideas during the last few months by Mary, who, having taken the strict orthodox line, had frequently made religion the subject of conversation between them. He was aware that now-a-days many persons thought as Celine, or rather as Celine's father did, for Otto knew well that it was her father's principles and ideas which the daughter had adopted, although the subject had never been mentioned between Mr. Arnold and himself.

As I said before, it was indifferent to

him what others thought, but it could not be indifferent to him what was thought by her whom he would willingly call his own. The disagreeable impression which Celine's words made upon him, showed itself so plainly in his face, that she could not but have perceived it.

Her lips softened into a rallying smile, when he did not immediately reply, and she suddenly fell into that defiant tone which she often adopted towards him.

"Would you like to hear any more heresies from me, Otto? Come, let me make a confession of my faith, now that you have once begun to draw me out, and as the faggots are done away with. Listen, then: I do not believe in a life after this life; I do not believe in the Divine origin of the Bible, nor in the truth of its narratives. Do you wish to hear more now, Otto?"

"No, I thank you, Celine—or rather, yes; I should just wish to know whether there is anything in which you do believe?"

"Much obliged for your kind interest," answered Celine, springing up from the bench on which they were sitting, and, with the same mocking smile on her lips, she made a courtesy to Otto; then, becoming serious again, she said:

"I believe in God as the principle of good, and in the Devil as the principle of evil—the two contending powers which war against each other in human nature, and are the origin of that mixture of good and evil which is called man."

"But then do you not also believe that we must strive in order that the principle of good may get the upper hand in us, Celine?"

"I believe," answered Celine, imitating like a naughty child Otto's serious tone and the sound of his voice, "that it is time to go home, and a good dominie has been lost in Otto Welters."

And she laughed with the clear laugh into which her more serious moods usually

dissolved themselves. When she saw that Otto did not join in it, but bit his lips as if annoyed, she came a step nearer to him, laid her hand on his shoulder, and, looking into his eyes half crying, half laughing, she said in an entirely altered tone:

"Tell me, Otto, is it not strange that two such good friends as we are should not think alike upon one single subject? Is it not strange that you never say anything of which the contradiction does not instantly come into my head? I often wonder to myself, Otto, that you can still feel any wish to talk to me, and I believe that if you were not so good, and if you were to put into words the aversion which I read in your eyes, we should have had a quarrel long ago." . . .

All Otto's less agreeable impressions melted away at her words. As she stood before him with such a trusting, childlike air, her hand on his shoulder and her eyes turned full upon him while she spoke of his aversion to her, all at once every thought gave way to an irresistible desire to tell her what his heart felt for her. How and what he had said to her as he took her hand suddenly between his own he could scarcely recall to himself afterwards, and I should fall short of the truth if I were to write down the actual words which he uttered in his emotion as a formal declaration of love. But certain it was, that he said enough to be understood by Celine; that he saw that he was understood when she withdrew her hand from his, and stepped back a few paces. All her natural color had fled from her cheeks when, leaning against a tree, she cast a proud glance at Otto, and said in a cold tone: "Have I ever given you reason to believe that these words would be welcome to me, Otto Welters?"

"No, Celine," he said, simply, "but some time or other I must have told you the bold wishes which my heart cherished, and why not now? Yes, and just now I

have a right to speak, now that your father is ill, and I know how the anxiety as to your future weighs upon his mind. Celine, give me the right to be your natural protector when the day dawns which your father knows is not far off, and when you will be left behind, solitary and forsaken."

Otto had again taken her hand, whilst he spoke to her in an earnest tone, evidently coming from his heart. When he adverted to the death of her father, a shudder passed through her, tears glistened in her eyes, but again she withdrew her hand.

"You are good and noble, Otto!" she said, softly; "I feel it an honor that you should wish me to be your wife; I am grateful to you, but it must not, it cannot be. You and I are not suited to each other as man and wife; I should make you just as unhappy as you would me."

"Let me try, Celine; I cannot abandon my wish without being deeply unhappy; I love you so inexpressibly!" . . .

But she did not let him say more.

"No, no!" she interrupted him in a wild tone, which now sounded almost angry; "I am not worthy that you should love me; no one must love me. I do not wish that any one should love me," and, turning suddenly from Otto, she rushed down a steep path which led straight from the hill to the house, and where in the thick underwood she soon disappeared from his sight.

He did not try to hold her back; he did not try to follow her; he knew enough.

Celine did not love him. Her answer: "Have I ever given you reason to believe that these words would be welcome to me?" for the moment, at least, chilled his warm heart.

She had said truly; he had been bold without right or reason, without her ever having shown by word or deed that she was well inclined towards him, and yet he had been so foolish as to hope that she

would accept his love, and to this vain hope he had sacrificed Mary, and now he was punished.

"You and I are not suited to each other as man and wife!" these words of Celine's also were continually ringing in his ears.

Would they prove true? Did the difference of their education and mode of thought make between them an impassable cleft, which even his great love had not power to bridge over? Yes, she must be right, but now he did indeed love her.

Plunged in these reflections, he had sunk down on the spot where Celine had stood, his face buried in his folded arms, and full of bitter, sad thoughts.

In this motionless position, in the undisturbed silence of the wood, there was something which operated to calm the storm raging within him. He shuddered at the thought that he should have to get up at last and go back to the old routine of work and life; that he must show his face without any trace of the martyrdom of his soul; that he must come forward the same man as before, although in reality all that had made life worth having, and even hope itself, that benevolent comforter, had gone from him. It made him shudder, and caused him to bury his face still deeper in the soft cool turf, and think of the dead in the silent churchyard, for whom the world has passed away, with all its sorrows, hopes, and wishes. . . .

But I conjecture that gradually calm and more consolatory thoughts inspired him; at all events, when a couple of hours later he reached Dilburg and his own rooms, though somewhat paler than usual, nothing peculiar was perceptible in his manner while he packed a few travelling necessaries in his portmanteau, wrote a note to his father, and, making use of that enviable and always available privilege of the lords of creation, "business," he left the town by the first train.

CHAPTER XIII.**GREAT CHANGES.**

Otto's resolution to leave Dilburg for a short time had ripened during his long meditation in Beckley Wood.

His reason had been so far victorious that he had admitted the truth of those words of Celine's, "You and I are not suited to each other." But the victory could not be completed in Dilburg, where the vicinity of Beckley was in itself a great temptation, which might any day prove stronger than his will.

Thus he set out on his journey with the best intentions, if not indeed to forget Celine, at least to overcome his love, yet at the same time secretly promising himself to return and again make an effort to win her favor, should he find it impossible to drive her image from his heart.

For my part, I really believe that Otto went away for a simple *acquit de conscience*, though possibly he set off the more hurriedly with a view to a more speedy return, but if this were so, I can assure you that he acted in good faith; that he took his place to Amsterdam, purposely choosing a town where he knew no one; that on arriving at Amsterdam he in all good faith shut himself up in a room at the "Pays Bas," and sat there the whole of a long evening, solely with the object of forgetting Celine Arnold.

A clever advocate was Otto Welters. This could not be denied, but in the suit between his heart and his reason, he did not show more penetration than most of us would have done in a similar case.

Here Otto stayed for a whole day; he walked through the bustling crowded streets and along the fine canal, paid a visit to Artis, or "the Artis," as I fear he called it; the Amsterdammers recognized him as "a stranger," meaning by the term stranger, in its fullest sense, that con-

temptible being who has not been born and bred on the banks of the Amstel.

In the evening he sauntered through Kalver Street along the well-lighted shops. You will hardly believe it, but so it was, that when he returned to his hotel he had not yet forgotten Celine; *ergo*, he came to the conclusion the very same evening that the suppression of his passionate love for her was an impossibility. Had he not done all that was possible? Had he not fled from the temptation of seeing her again? Could he help it if his heart would not be forced to resign his most ardent wish? Was it not through the influence of his reason that he was here in Amsterdam, where he felt more miserable and lonely than he had ever been before? Should he not return? Should he not speak once more to Celine, and at least try again to make himself agreeable to her?

He smiled as he thought of the proverb which says that "Cologne and Aix were not built in a day," and towards noon on the following day he was back in Dilburg. A few moments after he had entered the room he rang the bell with such unusual violence that Mrs. Geele rushed up-stairs in alarm. She found Otto, red in the face, holding an open letter in his hand, while he asked in a hurried voice, "When was this letter brought here?"

"I cannot tell you, sir; I did not take it in."

"Then send up at once the person who did take it in."

Mrs. Geele stared at Otto with surprise. He had never spoken to her in so rude and unfriendly a tone before, and this, too, after a few days' absence, which she thought might at least have given occasion for a friendly greeting.

But the worst was yet to come. No one in the house either knew or chose to know anything about the letter. Mietje thought that Pietje, Naatje that Kaatje, and Hendrik

that Hein had taken in the letter, whilst the mutual accusations of the whole family almost descended to the olive branch, which, for the moment, was in Mrs. Geele's arms.

"It was too bad of him, but Mr. Otto had actually stamped with his foot," so Mrs. Geele often afterwards stated; "and he, too, such a quiet well-mannered gentleman, who never gave trouble to any one."

The mystery of Otto's strange behavior will never be unveiled to the respectable Mrs. Geele, but for ourselves, who are privileged to take a peep at the letter itself, the matter is easily explained.

"Otto, my father is dying. He wishes to see you. For Heaven's sake come as quickly as possible.

"CELINE."

Think of Otto's sensations on reading these lines of Celine's and on finding it impossible to ascertain when they were written.

Perhaps the very evening of his departure, and if so, then all must long since be over. Celine would have looked for him in vain, and she must have been alone in the fearful hours by the death-bed of her father, whose wish to speak to Otto must then have been unfulfilled, and all through his own unpardonable fault in going off on that foolish journey to Amsterdam. These thoughts weighed like lead upon his heart, as he hurried out of the house to go to Beckley.

He held his breath as he entered the gate and saw that the shutters of the house were not closed. Thank Heaven, if he were late, he was not too late. Yet already the stillness of death reigned in the house when Otto entered it. The old servant answered his hurried questions in a whisper, and they both crept softly up-stairs to the room where the dying man lay.

"Is he dying, or is he dead?" thought Otto, as he noiselessly entered the room,

where a large fire on the hearth, and the last rays of the setting sun, seen through the closed curtains, shed a light so faint and flickering that a few moments passed before Otto recognized, in the two motionless forms by the fireside, Mr. Arnold and his daughter.

"Dying or dead?" he again asked himself, as he distinguished the altered countenance of the sick man, who lay on a sofa moved near the fire. Coming nearer, he also saw Celine sitting on a stool close to the sofa, her hands clasped in that of her father, and gazing on his face with an expression of dull despair.

On the hearth-rug at her feet Cæsar was lying, and when Otto entered he lifted up his shaggy head from her lap and greeted him with a friendly motion of his tail.

Celine also turned her eyes towards Otto, as he stood hesitating what to do or say, and gazing in silence at the countenance of the invalid, who lay on his back with his eyes closed; but when Otto approached the couch, she raised herself half up, and bending over her father, she said in a soft tender tone, such as a mother would use to a sick child:

"Father, dear, Otto is come at last. He is here. You wished to see him once more, did you not?"

A faint color came into the worn sallow face of the invalid at Celine's words, whilst his dark eyes, now so large and hollow, were raised with a searching look.

A glance from Celine brought Otto to her side. She rose from her seat and placed his hand in her father's, and Otto, deeply affected, seated himself beside the sofa.

"I have only just received Celine's note," he said, in an agitated voice, addressing his words partly to the sick man and partly to Celine, who was now standing on the other side of the sofa. "I have been out of town for a day or two. Can I do anything for you, Mr. Arnold?"

With the help of Otto and Celine, the sick man raised himself up a little. He had whispered to them to do this, but when he began to speak again, it was with a clear though weak voice.

"No one can do anything for me, Welters—man proposes and God disposes. My time is come, and my work is not finished. It has all been wrong, and all has failed."

He covered his face with his thin, wasted hands, heaving deep sighs, which bore witness to his mental distress.

"Can it ever be wrong to dedicate one's best powers to a work which one is thoroughly convinced is good?" said Otto, consoling him.

"No, no! indeed." Mr. Arnold now spoke with difficulty, and in broken sentences. "The tool is broken, but the Creator lives. Truth shall have its way when the time comes. But it was wrong to sacrifice my daughter's interests to this work; it was wrong to keep her separated from the world; I was blinded. By *my* fault she is now alone, without friends, without knowledge of the world—alone and helpless."

He spoke these words in a despairing tone, and with a voice which became weaker and weaker every moment.

"I have already told you before, Mr. Arnold, that I will be all that I can to Celine," said Otto, taking the hand of the dying man in his own; "let me repeat it to you once more. As long as I live she shall find in me every support." . . .

Here Otto's assurances were suddenly interrupted by Celine. Whilst her father was speaking these words of self-reproach, she had knelt down by his side and covered his hand with ardent kisses. When he fell back exhausted, and Otto began to speak, she suddenly rose up from her kneeling posture and gazed at Otto with a strange, fixed look. Then she bent over the sick man, and with unnatural calmness she

said in her ordinary clear, sonorous voice:

"Father, would it give you ease of mind if you left me as the engaged wife of Otto Welters?"

The face of the dying man lightened up, and his eyes wandered inquiringly from Celine to Otto, who, at these unexpected words, had started up from his chair with a look of pleased surprise. Then the sick man whispered:

"That, more than anything, would make me happy, my child; oh, so happy!"

"Then, be it so," said Celine, firmly, though, at these words, all color forsook her cheeks—and reaching out her hand over the sofa to Otto, she gave him an indescribable look, at the same time sad and proud, triumphant and despairing.

When she felt the cordial pressure of Otto's hand, as he held her cold trembling fingers, she slowly bent down her head and imprinted a kiss on her father's forehead, and he gazed with a happy expression in his eyes on their hands clasped in each other.

"Be patient with my dear child, Welters," he said, in a hardly audible whisper; and the long deep sigh which followed left Celine Arnold an orphan.

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Five days later, we find Otto again in one of the down-stairs rooms at Beckley—the parlor where he had so often sat in pleasant conversation with the man to whom he had that morning paid the last tribute of respect as a friend and chief mourner.

During all these five days he had not once seen Celine.

On that evening, when they were standing together by the death-bed, he had witnessed a burst of grief so wild and passionate that he could not think of it afterwards without a shudder. It was as if, with her father's last breath, Celine had lost all self-command.

Otto still saw her form bent over the

couch ; he still heard her bitter self-reproaches, the wild words of imprecation with which she accused herself of having been a bad daughter to the best of fathers, who had loved her so tenderly ; he still saw her as she covered with warm kisses the cold face of the dead ; and when her feelings at last found relief in an overwhelming flood of tears, Otto had himself succeeded, with gentle authority, in taking her away from the chamber of death.

But since that evening he had not seen her again, although he had passed day after day at Beckley, engaged in carrying out the instructions which had been left to him by the deceased in a sealed packet, and which had kept him entirely occupied every day with pressing business.

Every day he had made efforts to see Celine, but every day she had excused herself, and, however much this might inconvenience him, he was too busy to think much about it ; but now that the funeral was over, his feelings began to assert themselves, and he had just sunk into a melancholy mood, full of bitter thoughts, when the servant brought the message which he had been waiting for so many days—that Celine was expecting him.

Whatever feelings had been uppermost in Otto's mind, it is certain that his warm heart overflowed with love and compassion when he found her so altered, so pale and fallen away, sitting in an arm-chair drawn near the fire. Pale and fallen away, and yet so beautiful in a white morning gown, carelessly put on, with all the richness of her black luxuriant hair, which, hanging loose, concealed her form as in a dark veil. When Otto entered, she spoke a few gentle Malay words to the Javenese maid who stood beside her, and who retired with her work into the farthest window-seat, while Celine put out her hand to Otto with a mournful smile.

At the first moment they were both too much affected to speak ; hot tears flowed

down Celine's pale cheeks, but, forcing herself evidently with a great effort to be calm, she said gently, "Don't be displeased with me, Otto, that I have not received you all these days. I could not—indeed I *could* not." There was an overwhelming sorrow in the tone in which she said this. She seemed for a moment to find it necessary to collect her strength before she could go on. "I owe you much gratitude, but I have not been in a state to care for anything."

"Celine," said Otto, interrupting her, and taking a chair near her, "do not speak of gratitude ; that word distresses me. The little I have been able to do for you, and for him whom I mourn with you, is not worth mentioning ; but I have longed to speak to you, because I wish there should be a perfect understanding as to the relation in which we stand to each other."

A deep blush colored Celine's cheek ; she turned away from Otto, and by this sudden movement her hair, falling over her face, concealed her from his gaze. He saw with a painful sensation this, perhaps, involuntary motion, but it strengthened him in what he had determined to say.

"I believe I understand what made you fear to meet me, Celine, but you are mistaken if you think that I will take advantage of what your goodness of heart made you say in order to lighten the anxious cares of a dying man. I honor you for it. I once had the boldness to say I loved you, and I will only add that I love you now more than ever, if that be possible ; but my love is not so selfish that I place my happiness above yours. And I must, therefore, tell you that I am fully prepared to regard as unsaid the words that you then spoke, if you wish it so. Say so, Celine, and for your sake I will so far conquer myself, that you shall never perceive that I have anything more than the affection of a brother for you—and as a brother I will

stand by you and help you in all your difficulties."

She did not permit him to speak further ; she had already turned her face again towards him, and she now raised her dark eyelashes, which drooped over her eyes, and, speaking in a voice of deep emotion, she said :

" You are good and generous in all things, Otto, but you are mistaken if you think that I have not let you come to me sooner, because I repent of the promise I made you. No, Otto, that is not so. Now he is dead, I have no one in the world who loves me but yourself. When I refused your first offer, I did so principally for your sake, because I know myself better than you know me, Otto." There came over Celine a nervous excitement when she thus spoke ; her cheeks colored up, her eyes, which were still moist, began to sparkle. She was indescribably beautiful as she sat by Otto, and she made an ineffaceable impression on him for his whole life.

In after years, in altered circumstances, she stood always before his mind just as he had seen her at this moment, as his best and happiest recollection of her. " When we were last in the wood together, Otto," Celine continued, " when our conversation on religion showed us how much we differed in opinion, I said to you that I believed in two powers, God and the Devil. I believe this, Otto, because I find from day to day the conflict of two powers in my inmost heart, but I also believe that with me the Devil is the strongest power, and that, with all my good intentions, I am his victim ; therefore, I do not believe that I can make any man happy, unless I so loved him as I feel that I am capable of loving."

" And that love, Celine, cannot I hope to win ? "

For a moment only she looked down, then, raising her eyes towards him with a

brave, honest expression, she said in a decided tone : " No, Otto ; the man that I could love, for whom my whole nature could deny itself, and for whose sake I could become what a wife should be, gentle, obedient, and submissive, that man must be a different man from you ; but I will say also that such a man I have never yet met, and if I do not love you, Otto, as I could love, at least there is no one whom I love more than you. Is that enough for you ? will you take me with all my faults and shortcomings ? will you help me to overcome the devil within me ? — then I will thankfully accept your hand as that of my only friend in my solitary and forsaken condition."

She held out her hand to him, and Otto did not hesitate a moment in taking it. All the passions which had so long slumbered within him, which his reason had often and often endeavored to suppress, woke up with redoubled force at the prospect of the fulfilment of that ardent wish which his heart had so long cherished. Kneeling by Celine's chair, and covering her hand with kisses, he spoke in half-broken, unconnected words of his happiness and gratitude and of his love, which was content with the assurance that she was not disinclined towards him, and at least loved no one better than himself.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE HAPPIEST DAY IN OTTO'S LIFE.

THREE months had elapsed since the last-mentioned events.

Dilburg had not only devoured but digested the news, the wonderful news, that Otto Welters, whom every one supposed to have been engaged to Mary van Stein, was going to be married to the daughter of the late mysterious resident at Beckley. That this news had given rise to much gossip among the Dilburgers it is superfluous to state. If I were to write down all

that people thought and said on this subject, I should lengthen my simple narrative so as to weary my reader.

I will only remark, *en passant*, that some of the Dilburgers said that Otto had treated Mary very ill, whilst others, on the contrary, knew for *certain* that Mary had thrown over Otto. Others again were perfectly *certain* that it was only out of pique that Otto was marrying Celine ; and some said, with a smile, that Master Otto was a sly fox, and that he knew very well what he was about in securing the rich heiress, an orphan child, that coveted prize of the marrying men of the nineteenth century ; men whose grandfathers, with an income of a thousand guilders, would bring home a portionless girl to their dwelling, which was furnished with just the necessaries barely sufficient for their requirements ; young couples who indeed had heard of sofas, easy-chairs, mirrors, carpets, "and curtains, but in their simplicity thought that these luxuries only befitted the wealthy.

A blessed simplicity it was which taught two loving hearts to be content with so little, which did not educate every girl as a future millionaire, but brought her up to her true vocation of wife and mother, and made it possible for the man who loved her to marry her, although her fair face was her only dower. Forgive me, if by this contemplation of our progress or degeneracy (which shall we call it ?) I have wandered away for a moment from Otto Welters, whose engagement to Celine Arnold made an indescribable impression even in the family circle.

Shortly after Mary's departure, he had informed his father by letter that his engagement with her had been broken off, without giving any reason ; and none of the family had had the courage to ask him any direct question about it, although the conjectures when Otto was not present might be called legion. Emmy especially was deeply affected by this totally unexpect-

ed news. In the last few months she had had a great deal of intercourse with Mary, whom on closer acquaintance she had learnt to esteem so highly, that all her former surprise at Otto's choice had entirely vanished. True, she had remarked that he was quieter and different from what he used to be, but in Mary's impending departure for a long winter at Montpellier she thought she had found a natural cause for this change. And Mary was exactly the same as usual up till the very last day when Emmy visited her. It was an enigma to Emmy, which finally had its solution in Otto's engagement to Celine, a solution which, from her contempt for Otto's faithlessness and compassion for Mary, cost her bitter tears.

It had not escaped Emmy, that since Mary's departure Otto had avoided being alone with her ; that he seldom spent a moment longer in his father's house than courtesy required, and that he found a hundred excuses not to pass an evening with his family. Moreover, she noticed that he was often restless and melancholy, and accordingly every day she tried to find an opportunity, which he as carefully avoided, of speaking to him alone ; and when at last, with a view to a private talk, wherein she should pour out her confidences and gain his in return, she went to look for him at his lodgings, he had just started on that little expedition to Amsterdam.

Then came Mr. Arnold's death, and Otto spent whole days at Beckley without once showing himself at home, and a few days later he had come with a face beaming with happiness to announce to his family his engagement to Celine, a piece of news which to them had already long ceased to be news. The acquaintance between Celine and the family of her intended did not, however, follow as immediately as might have been expected. Otto said that, on account of her father's death, Celine wished

for a few weeks of complete retirement, and more than a month had elapsed, when one evening, without any preparation, he brought her into the family circle. It needed but a slight acquaintance with Otto to perceive how nervous and agitated he was at this introduction. His eyes kept turning anxiously from one to another, as if he wished to see from the countenance of each the impression which Celine made. He endeavored in every way to draw her out, in order to show her to his family in all the peculiarity of her nature, which had so greatly attracted himself; but it was in vain. All his endeavors were shipwrecked by the half-perplexed, half-indifferent manner in which she sat on the sofa by Mrs. Welters, answering the questions addressed to her without showing the slightest interest, and obviously taking no pains to make herself agreeable, looking first at one and then at another with her great dark eyes, and by her manner unconsciously introducing constraint into a circle which was well known in Dilburg as an agreeable and sociable one.

When Mrs. Welters asked her to give them the pleasure of making acquaintance with her musical talents, which Otto had mentioned, and Otto seconded this request, she said curtly, "No, not this evening," with a decisiveness bordering on discourtesy. More sincere than civil, also, was the sigh of relief which she heaved when Otto proposed to take her home, and that this sigh found an echo with them all was a truth which he fully understood, and which rendered his frame of mind by no means enviable as they walked back to Beckley.

It made him silent and sombre, and certainly no very pleasant company for Celine, who, being hardly able to get from him even short and unmeaning answers, walked by his side the latter part of the way in silence. When they stood on the step of her house, and Otto hesitated to come in, she all at once took his hand be-

tween hers as he raised it to ring the bell, and by the light of the lamp above the house-door he saw her penitent face, which she lifted up towards him.

"Confess that I have behaved like a goose, and that I made you ashamed of me, Otto," she said, softly. "Do you know how it happened? I was frightened among all the strangers and before so many strange eyes."

But Otto's disappointment at her behavior was too great to be appeased, even in a slight degree, by her words, nor did they lessen the ill-humor which he had brought away with him.

"You ought not to look upon my family as strangers, Celine," he said, in a short, reproachful tone.

She instantly let go his hand, while a dark shadow passed over her face.

"No, of course I ought not," she answered, in the old defiant tone, which Otto, owing to the softening influence of grief, had not perceived in her since her father's death; "but if you expect me always to do what I ought, you will very often have to be angry with me." And, with an abrupt "Good night," she turned from him, gave a sharp pull at the bell, which made the alarmed servant come very quickly to open the door, and then immediately entered the house, without deigning to give Otto another look.

This was not the first time since their engagement that a little dispute had arisen between Otto and Celine. Yes, indeed, had he chosen to reflect, he might have perceived that her temper could not stand the slightest contradiction. But he did not reflect, and during the first few weeks after the death of Mr. Arnold, Celine, in a softened and subdued frame of mind, had, by her loving, cordial treatment of him, nestled so deep in his affection, that his reason would have had to speak very loud in order to overpower the voice of his heart. With his passionate love, he had

thus far found an excuse for all her faults and shortcomings ; in fact, he knew how to designate them by names which brought them into very close connection with the opposite virtues.

What lover could be blamed if he should call passion warm feeling, stubbornness character, insolence sincerity, irritability sensitiveness ? Is it his fault that Cupid has placed rose-colored spectacles on his nose—spectacles the existence of which he has never once suspected, thinking that he sees with his old sharp eyes ? The disputes between Otto and Celine had not however, at the time of which I am now speaking, been of a serious character, nor did they relate to matters of importance ; in almost all Celine was victorious, except in the question about an old lady, a former governess of Otto's mother, whom, for the sake of decorum, he had invited to take up her abode at Beckley, and to remain there till Celine's wedding-day : but, on this occasion, Otto discovered how many difficulties Celine's entire want of knowledge of the world might give rise to.

The invitation to Miss Potter was sent off by Otto as a very natural thing, without the knowledge of Celine, who took it as a personal affront. She broke out into a passion, and a violent scene ensued. When Otto wished calmly to point out to her that Miss Potter's presence at Beckley was the only condition under which, in the eyes of the world, he could be permitted to visit her every day, her eyes sparkled with indignation. She wanted nobody to watch her. She would not have that stranger in the house, and if Otto were not permitted to come to her when she was alone, he might, as far as she was concerned, stay away.

It was fortunate that the arrival of her guardian the same day, and his approbation of Otto's proceedings, brought the matter to an end.

Of her guardian I have not yet spoken.

He was an Indian acquaintance of Mr. Arnold's, and, with him, had come back to his own country, and consequently was, to a certain degree, in his confidence ; had visited him once at Beckley, and, after the death of the friend to whom the guardianship of his daughter had been confided, was selected by Celine's father for this duty.

According to the written directions which Otto received, he was to give notice to Major Ronhencies of the guardianship devolving upon him by the death of Mr. Arnold ; but the said Major happened to be engaged in amusing himself at Paris after his long stay in India when the intelligence reached him, and I do not believe that I am doing him justice when I say that what distressed him most in the death of his friend Arnold, was this serious matter of the guardianship of his grown-up daughter. The funeral ceremony had been over a week before he arrived at Beckley, and it was a greater relief to him than he could venture in courtesy to show when Otto made him acquainted with his engagement to Celine, which had received the approbation of her father, and which would limit the guardianship of the Major to a few months at most.

Having taken more in form than in effect an inspection of the affairs of the deceased, and having waited for the arrival of Miss Potter ; after advising Celine not to put off her marriage for long, and after giving his address, and imprinting a kiss on the forehead of his ward, he felt his conscience perfectly at ease, and returned to Paris as speedily as possible, where his time was so entirely occupied with pleasure that he could not manage to be present at Celine's marriage, and only gave evidence of the warm feelings of his guardian heart by a silver tea-service.

For at last Celine had herself definitely fixed the wedding-day.

So far she had contrived to escape from

Otto's pressing requests respecting it for several weeks by all sorts of excuses, until at length these excuses were quite exhausted, and the betrothal took place in the first days of January, whilst the 15th was settled as the date which should make Otto Welters the happy husband of Celine Arnold.

That the marriage was to take place as quietly as possible requires no explanation, but "as quietly as possible" had a more restricted meaning here than is usually applied to the words. However quietly, as a rule, a marriage ceremony is to take place, whether by choice or some reason of sorrow or mourning, it usually presents opportunities for festivities, for a little gathering of good friends, and for visits and congratulations; but in this marriage nothing was said of all these things.

Otto had given way on this point, as on so many others, that he should not present Celine to his Dilburg acquaintances till after her marriage, and her mourning was accepted as a sufficient excuse, and naturally there was no talk of visits and felicitations.

Even with Otto's own family, Celine had not attained a confidential footing during these months. She had once invited them all to Beckley, and two or three times she had spent the day with them in company with Otto; but she always continued to feel like a stranger among them; and although she conducted herself better than on her first visit, she silently blessed the moment when she could return homeward.

Elizabeth was the only one with whom she felt at her ease, and that was perhaps because Elizabeth was the only one who felt attracted to her. After their first acquaintance, Elizabeth passed several days at Beckley, and in her society the cheerfulness and life which had slumbered in Celine since her father's death seemed to wake up again. It did Otto good to hear

her old merriment again, to see the sparkle of her eyes return. Yes, he even greeted with pleasure her old wilfulness, although she would often relapse for whole days into deep sorrow and depression.

And in Elizabeth's society there came back all the childishness which formed part of Celine's character. It often happened that Otto, sitting in Mr. Arnold's study up-stairs, busy with the many affairs and arrangements which rested with him, was attracted down-stairs by the loud laughing of both the girls, who were amusing themselves with things that would have afforded mere sport for school-girls; for example, dressing up Cæsar, who was then placed in a corner as sentinel, with Otto's hat on its head and his stick in its paw. Another time he found, when he came down, the busts of Voltaire and Rousseau metamorphosed into ladies sitting at the tea-table in caps and petticoats, or Celine would be performing an Indian dance in an Indian dress, with peculiar motions of the head and hands, which Elizabeth tried to imitate.

Although, for the moment, this might all appear very childish to Otto, coming in, as he did, from serious occupations, yet he could not help rejoicing at Celine's restored cheerfulness, and at the friendship which had arisen between her and Elizabeth. It was a great disappointment to him that Emmy and Celine did not, upon the whole, seem to be attracted towards each other; that Emmy had never said a hearty, approving word to him about Celine, or ever paid a visit to Beckley of her own accord. Otto was hopeful by nature, and the habit which had grown up with him from his youth of expecting all good from the future, had softened many sorrows, and lessened the bitterness of many disappointments; so he hoped now that Celine and Emmy, when they were actually sisters, would learn to know and love each other, and his head, moreover, was so full of

business that he could not entertain any further thoughts about the matter.

Whether at the present moment he felt happy, he might perhaps have had some difficulty in saying. Since the first weeks after her father's death, when the first sorrow was overcome, and therewith the softening influence of that sorrow had faded away, Celine's whimsical nature had again entirely got the upper hand. There were days when she would vouchsafe him neither answer nor observation, and when, indeed, her behavior to Otto was almost as if she hated him.

When Otto found himself forced to realize this as a sad fact, and seriously thought of freeing Celine from an engagement which he feared was not entered into with the free consent of her heart; when, after a sleepless night, he repaired to Beckley, full of such resolutions, just that day she would receive him with her most winning smile, she would throw her arms round his neck, and whisper to him something about the black devil which had got the better of her once more yesterday, and in a twinkling Otto forgot all except that he loved her, and that he looked forward to his marriage as the fulfilment of his most ardent wish.

But I must not dwell too long on this. It seems to me that with the knowledge of Celine's character you may place her whole behavior before your eyes. I will pass over all further preparations, and tell you about the 15th of January, which was marked in Otto's almanac with a red cross.

Certainly January cannot be considered a very poetical time for a wedding, yet this day had done its best for Otto and Celine. The air was clear, the sun shone cheerfully, and although the trees were not adorned with leaves and blossoms, the white frozen rime which outlined every twig might indeed be called beautiful, as well as the snow-covered earth glittering in the beams of the

winter sun. If such a winter's day as this 15th of January should be an exhilarating sight to every one, how much more so to him who to-day was to witness the fulfilment of his dearest wishes; and yet now, as we enter the presence of the happy bridegroom, we see settled on his countenance an expression bordering on sadness. We find him fully prepared for the ceremony more than half-an-hour too early; his long beard concealed the greater part of his white neckcloth, but his bran new black suit at this early hour of the morning spoke of "great doings," as well as the pretty white bouquet for the bride which had just arrived from the florist; and if these things were not enough to show what was going on, at all events Mrs. Geele's decorations of evergreens, and flags, with blue and red paper roses, bigger than the biggest dahlias in existence, would have put one on the scent. But Otto's countenance was disturbed as he bent over a letter with the postmark of Montpellier, which he found by the side of his as yet untasted breakfast. The postmark, and the well-known feminine handwriting, how many recollections had it not recalled—recollections that in the past months had been stifled by so many other things? The well-known writing gave him pain, and yet he could not withdraw his eyes from the few lines of which the letter consisted, and which were as follows:—

"Emmy writes me word that your marriage is fixed for the 15th, my dear Otto, and from this foreign land I feel a wish to join in the congratulations of those who surround you. Believe that from my heart I rejoice in your happiness, and may Heaven's best blessing attend you and your bride.

"If it can give you a single pleasant thought, receive the assurance that I can recall former days without pain, and that I still set a high value on living in your

thoughts as your true and interested friend.
MARY."

Whilst Otto read these words, the calm, pale countenance, and soft, melancholy eyes came before him with an almost overwhelming distinctness. He reproached himself for having thought so little about her, who a few months before had been so much to him.

The little letter, so welcome to him from the forgiveness which it expressed, at the same time pained him. It brought to his recollection a time he would gladly have forgotten—a time when he had learnt to know himself as weak and inconstant; a time of which no man would willingly be reminded when he had stood ashamed before a proud and noble woman's heart.

The arrival of the great gala coach, which was to take the bridegroom to Beckley, at last put an end to his meditations, and gave a more natural direction to his thoughts. At Beckley, Otto found his whole family already assembled—Burgomaster Welters, his wife, William, Emmy, Mina, and Elizabeth—with two good friends of Otto's, who were to be Celine's witnesses.

In none, except perhaps with Elizabeth, was there much feeling as to the bride. Burgomaster Welters valued in Celine the "good match" for his son; and to Mrs. Welters, Otto's marriage was a matter of indifference, as he had not chosen either Mina or Elizabeth, which she would gladly have seen happen. To William and Mina also it was a matter of indifference, whilst on Emmy's heart the recollection of Mary, and the suffering inflicted on her by Otto's marriage, left a shadow which made any festive feeling impossible, and prevented her from extending her sisterly affection to Celine.

In a certain sense she regarded Celine as the cause of the coolness and separation between herself and Otto; she felt that a

good hearty word of congratulation on his choice would bring back Otto to his old confidential relation with her, which he had only discontinued because her silence about Celine was disagreeable to him, and yet that word she could not utter without insincerity.

Celine's merit in Emmy's eyes was small. It was no difficult task to discover faults in Celine, and especially with such prejudiced eyes as Emmy's were; and, as happens with the best of us, this prejudice made her unjust, and caused her entirely to overlook the good that was in Celine, and to pity in silence poor Otto, who, now enchanted by her beauty, would sooner or later wake up from his blindness to a long repentance.

When, however, Otto entered the room where all were assembled, she felt that all her thoughts gave way to one, that her own brother was to-day to be united in marriage with the woman who, whatever she might be, was his free choice, and that that brother, from the love she bore him, was entitled to her good wishes and prayers for his welfare. When he had shaken hands with all, and came at last to her, her eyes filled with tears, and she whispered to him her heartfelt wishes for his happiness; and then Otto stooped and gave her a kiss, which he had not done all these months, saying gently to her, "Celine will find a sister in you Emmy; will she not?" and from that moment Emmy felt more kindly disposed towards Celine, and determined to go to meet her with affection, and, if possible, to obtain her love.

While these thoughts were passing in Emmy's mind, Otto had left the room to fetch his bride.

When he came into the passage, he was suddenly aware of the presence of old Miss Potter, who came to meet him with a somewhat disturbed countenance.

"Is Celine not ready yet?" he asked hastily.

" My dear young gentleman, you must still have a little patience. I hardly like to tell you, but two hours ago Celine went out riding, and is not yet come back."

" Out riding, and this morning?" said Otto, astonished and disturbed. " Heavens! Miss Potter, could you not have prevented it?"

" She was off before I knew of it; but if I had known it, who can prevent Celine Arnold from doing anything she chooses?"

" Out riding?" he again repeated; and added, in an anxious tone, " What in Heaven's name can I do?"

" Do? why, wait patiently, dear young man, and trust that she will return soon enough to admit of your marriage being completed to-day. Come up-stairs into Celine's sitting-room, and there you can wait undisturbed, and see her from a distance when she comes. Meanwhile, at the risk of burthening my conscience, I will serve up to the family some little fictions as to why the bride keeps us waiting."

I believe that good Miss Potter felt great compassion for Otto, and wished as ardently as himself for Celine's return, although in her temporary stay at Beckley she had formed decided opinions as to Otto's chance of happiness in this approaching connection. She came up-stairs to him as quickly as she could, and endeavored as far as possible to lead him out of the uncomfortable state of mind in which he was. She told him about his mother's wedding, which she had attended, and for the sake of Otto feigned a calmness which in reality she was losing more and more every instant.

The half-hour that now followed seemed to Otto half an eternity; he did not listen at all to Miss Potter's stories. He walked restlessly up and down the room, stopping every instant at the window which commanded the high road. But, whether across hedges and ditches, or otherwise, Celine seemed somehow to have got back by an unusual way; at least, whilst Otto

was anxiously directing his eyes up the high road, the tramp of the horse on the snow near the house escaped him, and he suddenly saw her stop at the door.

She sprang quickly off her horse, threw the bridle to the groom, just stooped over Shimmel's head as if kissing him, and before Otto could reach the door it was thrown wide open, and Celine entered the room at the same moment that Miss Potter left it by another door. In spite of the winter morning, she seemed heated by her fast ride. As she stood in the doorway, with glowing cheeks and out of breath, she became aware, at her first glance, of Otto's unusually pale and agitated countenance.

" I had hoped, Celine," said Otto, in a reproachful tone, coming towards her, " that for this one morning your passion for riding would have been sacrificed to propriety. My family have all been waiting below nearly an hour, and if you delay any longer the legal time will have elapsed, and our marriage cannot be completed to-day."

" That would be indeed a pity," answered Celine, in a mocking tone, giving him one of her scornful looks; " and more especially a pity for me, as I should lose the opportunity to-day of becoming the obedient slave of my lord and master."

She was standing in the doorway, just opposite Otto, looking him full in the face with bold and angry eyes, while at her last words she made him a mocking bow. Otto instantly repented of his words when he saw how they disturbed her.

" Forgive me, Celine," he said, taking hold of her hand; " you know, I am sure, that I do not grudge you any pleasure, but you also know how I have been looking forward to this day. Can you take it ill that the waiting for you has appeared to me endless, and that the anxiety lest you should not come in time has put me out?"

At these conciliatory words Celine cast down her eyes, and when, after a moment of silence, she raised them towards him, they were full of tears.

"Who knows, Otto, whether it would not have been a blessing for you if I had not come in time?" she said, softly.

"You cannot mean that, Celine?" exclaimed Otto. "Must I once more say to you that I regard this day, which will make you mine, as the happiest day of my life?"

"No, no," she interrupted him, withdrawing her hand from his, and walking up and down the room in visible annoyance. Then suddenly she stopped before him, and said, in a voice trembling with emotion, "Otto, if I were to entreat you even now to release me from my word, not only on my own account, but on yours, would you do it?"

"No, Celine; I cannot release you from your word; you are free to take it back, but to give back at the last moment what is my greatest treasure—to give back voluntarily what you have given voluntarily, that cannot be. You have promised to be mine, and I come here in order that you may fulfil your promise. If you retract your word, I must submit, but, for my part, I neither can nor will give you up; you must not ask that of me."

When Otto had said these words so passionately, she grew pale.

"Otto," she began again, in an anxious tone, "dare you take upon yourself the responsibility of this union? Will you never reproach me that I became your wife in the full conviction that I should not make you happy?"

"I dare take that responsibility," he answered. "It shall be my endeavor to make you happy; in that I shall find my own happiness; and I hope I shall never forget the last prayer of your father, to be patient with his beloved child."

He clasped her in his arms, and kissed

away the tears which now flowed abundantly from her eyes. When she was somewhat composed, she whispered, "It was not to annoy you that I rode out, Otto; I have been to *his* grave, and have there prayed for his blessing. Now I am calm and prepared. Come, your family must not be kept waiting any longer." Freeing herself from his arms, she put out her hand, and was about to lead Otto with her, when he cast an uneasy glance at her habit. She caught his look, and said, laughing, "I forgot this trifle, Otto; how will you ever make me a civilized European woman?"

"If you would but recollect that I am to-day going to make you Mrs. Welters, I should be quite content," answered Otto.

"Send Elizabeth up-stairs to me, if she is willing to help me."

With his mind relieved, Otto now rejoined his family down-stairs, where he contradicted all Miss Potter's invented excuses with this simple communication, "that Celine had felt it necessary, before her marriage, to visit her father's grave, and had consequently been late." He then chatted away with his people in high good humor during the time which still elapsed before Elizabeth brought down the bride in triumph.

I have often spoken of Celine's beauty, too often, perhaps, for those who say with the proverb that "beauty is but skin-deep;" but yet once more, and for the last time, I will say how brilliantly beautiful she was in her black velvet dress, with the white bridal wreath in her dark hair, and her veil arranged in a somewhat foreign manner, as if she was concealed in a transparent cloud. This much is certain, that an involuntary exclamation of admiration escaped every one's lips when she entered the room, and the charming manner with which she greeted all who were present attracted them towards her more than they had ever been before.

The marriage of Otto and Celine was now completed without any remarkable occurrence, and at her express desire without any religious ceremony ; but when they came back to Beckley a short solemn address was delivered to them by the minister who had been Otto's tutor, and it appeared to make a visible impression on Celine. She seemed deeply affected when he made her kneel down, and obliged all the surrounding company to follow him in the prayer which he pronounced for the young couple.

After the completion of this ceremony a *déjeuner* took place at Beckley, at which, however, except the minister and the witnesses, no stranger took part. Celine was talkative and merry, and Otto's countenance beamed with happiness and content.

Burgomaster Welters gave a toast which was more remarkable for richness of words than of thoughts, and Celine made her first sacrifice to her wisely dignity by not bursting out laughing during or immediately after the speech, but after the lapse of some minutes.

At four o'clock the carriage came which was to take the young couple to Arnheim, whence they were to make a little excursion to Brussels. The farewell on both sides was calm and cheerful, without any emotion, for which, indeed, there was no occasion, as they were shortly to return and establish themselves at Beckley ; but when Celine had bid good-bye to all, she suddenly glided down to the ground in order to take Cæsar's great shaggy head between her hands and cover it with kisses, and warm tears rolled down her cheeks, whilst Otto helped her into the carriage. On the steps the family of Welters waved a salute to the married pair, but the cold drove them speedily into the house. The weather had changed ; the wind blew sharp from the north, and great thick flakes of snow fell upon the carriage which carried off Otto Welters and his young wife.

But, in spite of cold and snow and wind there was one being who remained on the steps until he gradually lost sight of the carriage which contained all that he loved best upon earth, a being that expressed the sorrow which filled his heart in a complaining howl—poor forsaken, despairing Cæsar.

CHAPTER XV.

TWO YEARS LATER.

Two years later. Yes, the winter months of the third year are passed already, and a new summer is at hand.

I will suppose, worthy reader, that you have been absent from Dilburg all this time; that we meet each other on a sunny May morning at the entrance of our little town, and that you address me with the inquiry, "Has much happened ; is much changed?"

Naturally enough it must be so when two summers and three winters have passed over a town and its inhabitants ; much has happened and much is changed, although outside everything is so exactly the same, that at first sight it seems impossible that all should not be the same within.

"Is not that the old iron foundry, the noise of which reaches us ?"

Yes, the same, and yet another, if you will. The owner, Mr. Müller, disposed of it on his return to America, and it is now the foundry of a Dilburg company, who carry on the business on a much larger scale than formerly.

The drama of which the foundry was the scene, if not forgotten, has at least passed away into the background of memory ; in the great newly built mansion, the reception rooms of which were thrown open on the fatal evening of the ball, and which is now partly used as a counting-house and partly as the residence of the director, there are strange faces gazing at us from behind the large window-panes.

"And that is the old churchyard, to the left of the broad gravel walk ?"

Yes, the same, with here and there another tombstone. With regard to one under the shade of a weeping willow, you will be glad that a heart has there come to its rest. Before we go farther we will read the inscription on this gray tombstone, which is close to another more discolored by wind and weather, whereby the unfortunate criminal is again united to her who was dearest to him in the whole world :

JOHANNA EVERSBERG
(NEE VAN REENEN),
AGED 48.

And now we will go together into the town, and on to the great market-place, where naturally everything is the same except the little linden trees round it, which have grown larger. We still read on the door of Master Geele's house, "Mr. Welters, advocate."

"Does he still live here?"

No; Otto Welters does not live here; but he still has his office here, for Beckley is too far from the town for him to expect his clients to go there after him.

"And Mr. Van Stein's house, is it again shut up?

Not *again*, but *still* shut up, dear reader. Mary and her father are still at Montpellier, but from necessity, not from choice. If we have ever smiled at the selfish invalid, at least now let us pity him with all our hearts. A new method of treatment practised upon Mr. Van Stein by an American doctor, instead of curing him, had the effect of entirely depriving him of the use of his limbs, which rendered his departure from Montpellier an impossibility.

During the whole of these last years, Mary has sat by her father's sick bed, and has nursed him with unremitting care and devotion. But it is said his strength is failing so much, that the day cannot be far distant when she will be relieved from her hard task, and that thus even for her better times are in prospect.

"The best comes last." I, at all events,

have kept till the last that about which I have the most to tell you. You ask, "Does not Burgomaster Welters live in that house ?

He did live there. Be calm, worthy reader. I purposely said nothing to you about him in the churchyard in order to spare your feelings, and you overlooked his white marble monument, but I can no longer conceal from you that Burgomaster Welters exchanged time for eternity three months ago. He was not ill long, and he suffered comparatively little, but during the last week he could not eat, and then it was all up with him ; and why, therefore, I ask you, should he remain any longer in this world ?

Poor man ! an hour before his death his wife came to his bedside with a dainty dish of stewed oysters ; even then he raised himself up at the savory smell of his favorite dish, but to eat was impossible. Falling back again with a deep sigh, his death-struggle began from that moment. His body was followed to the churchyard by a numerous crowd ; all the shutters in the streets through which the procession passed were shut ; striking funeral orations were made at his grave, and the good qualities recalled of the man who, if he had not accomplished great things during the twenty eight years he had been at the head of the town, had, at least, not thrown a pin in any one's way. . . . Now, three months later, Dilburg had entirely forgotten him, and his place was completely filled by the new Burgomaster.

But, whatever might be the case in Dilburg generally, I can assure you that the family of which the deceased had been the nominal head had not yet forgotten his death. In the first place, his death was not a matter of indifference to his wife, nor in a little town like Dilburg is it at all a matter of indifference to be the wife or to be only the widow of the Burgomaster.

Three months of forced retirement, three months of strict mourning, when not the

smallest scrap of white was permitted, were also, as regards Mina de Graaff, by no means a matter of indifference.

Mina de Graaff? Yes, dear reader. It grieves me to be obliged to tell you that no change has taken place in her maiden state, and in the mean time she has really overstepped the dreaded number of three crosses.

"And Captain Uno?"

Captain Uno is with his regiment in garrison at the Hague, whither he was transferred shortly after our last meeting. There was at that time in circulation a saying of his, which William de Graaff took the first opportunity of conveying to his sister, and from that moment Captain Uno's name was for ever banished from her lips.

A farewell ball was given by the club in Dilburg to the officers of the departing regiment; naturally wine was drunk, and naturally people were merry. I know not who brought Mina's name on the *tapis*, or who taunted Captain Uno respecting her, but it must have been on that occasion that he uttered the philosophic proverb, "that the horse should come to the oats, and not the oats to the horse." But there is no wind which blows nobody any good, and so the blue hussars, with Captain Uno and Mina's disappointment, marched out of Dilburg by one gate, to make room for the red hussars, who rode in by the other gate, bringing with them a young lieutenant, who scarcely six months later appeared in Dilburg society as the betrothed of Elizabeth.

Elizabeth was just of an age to be very romantic, and her young head had suffered amazingly by having devoured a great quantity of green and ripe romances; in imagination she had already indulged for a long time in dismal love stories, in which she was herself the heroine, and the hero the as yet unknown X.

As, however, her imaginary hero had

always an interesting, bronzed face, most probably a black brigand beard, and under no possible circumstances was without dark, flashing eyes, Elizabeth had originally bestowed but little attention on the fair lieutenant with blushing cheeks and soft blue eyes, who otherwise, as one of the best dancers at the Casino, stood high in her favor.

Her dances with him at the Casino, however, and the very marked manner in which he sought opportunities to meet her, had at last fixed Elizabeth's attention on him. It is true his blushing cheeks fell very short of her ideal, and that his name of Peter Smit was far from poetical, but when, on nearer acquaintance, her heart became involved, these trifles were overlooked, and our Elizabeth prepared herself in due form for the hapless love which had at last come.

It was exactly two days after she had arrived at the conviction that (according to the rules of romance) Lieutenant Smit was born in order to make her unhappy, when he declared himself, and so spoilt the game.

"The course of true love never did run smooth" was now her only comfort, and the affair, regarded from this point of view, became still more interesting.

Two lovers parted by the will or caprice of the parents or guardians, vows of eternal fidelity, secret interchange of letters, tears, despair, pining—perhaps even a runaway match—all whirled through Elizabeth's head, but it seemed as if all her romantic dreams were doomed to miscarry. Papa and Mamma Welters had even less to bring against Lieutenant Smit than Papa and Mamma Smit against Elizabeth. On the contrary, the wealthy parents of the loving and beloved Lieutenant promised a liberal contribution towards the expenses of setting up housekeeping, for which they were only waiting till his promotion to the rank of first lieutenant.

Thus nothing stood in the way of their love, and a happier, more contented pair of human beings, without one really serious thought in their two heads combined, never walked the earth, nor, with their good, honest hearts, and equable, serene tempers, gave so much promise of future domestic happiness.

I have said that Burgomaster Welters was not yet forgotten by his own family; still, if one entered the sitting-room unexpectedly, there would be nothing to remind one of the change except the mourning dresses. It is the same sociable-looking room, with its glass-doors opening out into the garden. Mrs. Welters sits just as formerly on the sofa, with a little table between her and Mina, who was busy trimming a short jacket with shining jet beads, and from the summer-house in the shrubbery close by, Elizabeth's merry laugh may be heard almost incessantly, with an occasional accompaniment in a man's voice.

William de Graaff sits in silence in an arm-chair, with an open book on his knees. He is paler and thinner than formerly, and, observing him closely, one can see in the constant change of his position something restless about him, very different from his former calmness. More than once his wandering eyes rest on a distant chair where an old acquaintance of ours is sitting, who, compared with others of the family, is much, very much, changed.

Do you remember Emmy Welters as she first appeared in my story?

Do you remember her clear, merry eyes, her winning smile, which continually brought the dimples into her round cheeks?

Nearly three years have passed since that time, and they have not passed without leaving their traces on Emmy's countenance.

A lovely face certainly it has remained, and reflecting a certain goodness of heart which would render attractive an exterior

less gifted by nature; but all the youthful joyousness and light-heartedness have vanished; the blue eyes have still the same honorable, upright expression as formerly, but have lost their brightness and their merry glance, and on her mouth is settled an earnest, mournful expression, which seems to have sealed up, as it were, the smile which once played around it. I have said that it was the past years which had left behind their traces on Emmy, and we have allowed her affairs to remain so long unnoticed, that it may not be asking too much of you to give your attention to her for a few moments.

We have seen with what good resolutions Emmy went forth to meet the future which she had chosen for herself; how she determined to do her best to bear her separation from Bruno courageously, in the hope of the happy future which waited her by his side. The strong and holy love which she felt for him had nothing of sickly sentiment in it. In her, love was a new force, an unknown courage, a cheerful hope which developed a fund of elasticity in her. Her life had become a double life—the outer life of the present, with the duties it imposed upon her; the inner life of the future, which made all present annoyances appear so small and trivial that they glided off her without troubling her.

And her annoyances were many.

Although not a word had ever been exchanged on the subject, Emmy was shown gradually, but all too clearly, that Mrs. Welters had never forgiven her for her disobedience with regard to her visit to the Eversbergs.

From that moment she had never spoken a friendly word to Emmy, and every advance on Emmy's part was met with icy indifference. Not that she was ever absolutely disagreeable to her, or that she opposed her; but it was as if Mrs. Welters had determined not to trouble herself any more about her, and to avoid any interfer-

ence in her affairs. No word, either of praise or blame, ever passed her lips. She required nothing from Emmy; never allowed her to be of the slightest use, and declined all help from her in household matters, in which neither Mina nor Elizabeth were spared. And whenever Emmy asked for her advice in anything, her inevitable answer, with an expression of indifference, was, "I don't know, but you can do as you please; that will be the best."

At first Emmy had considered this as a just punishment for her disobedience, and had borne it patiently, trusting that the anger of her stepmother would wear out in time. But it did not; on the contrary, it seemed gradually to develop into an insurmountable aversion, which, at any rate, was not diminished by later events.

When Emmy at last came to the conviction that the love of her stepmother must be always unattainable—when she understood the cold disposition which, accustomed to make anything bend and bow to it, could neither forget nor forgive where once it had been defied—she ceased to disturb herself about the matter; she wasted no love where that feeling was evidently despised, and learned to accommodate herself to the peculiar position which she held in her father's house.

More and more she withdrew herself from the family circle, and, in the absence of any duty or business resting on her, she began again, in the solitude of her own room, to take up the studies which she had broken off since her school days, and to seek occupation in them.

In these, as in all things, Bruno was her principal thought. He should find her, when they met again, advanced in knowledge and mental culture; and the years which would cost him so much toil and struggle should not be passed by her simply in pleasure or in useless occupations.

Not that she definitely withdrew herself from the amusements which Dilburg

afforded, so as to attract attention; but it soon became a well-known fact in the family that Emmy did not much care about going out, and that it need not be regarded as a sacrifice if she allowed Mina or Elizabeth to go instead of her, whenever, as frequently happened, only two of the young ladies were invited.

I have no doubt that in Dilburg, and also in the family, there were persons who connected the cause of this with Bruno Eversberg, either in the affection which, owing to the sad events, she was obliged to suppress, or in a secret love affair between them, the possibility of which crossed their minds.

But any such suspicions were dispelled by the cheerful contentedness which was the characteristic of her disposition; and in the evenings, under the influence of the sociability which ruled in the family, and of which I have spoken before, she was even considered to be quite merry. And merry, people imagined, no one could be who was enduring a secret pang, or whose thoughts were fixed on a far distant land, beyond the insurmountable barrier of the great ocean.

For, as is mostly the case, Emmy was judged by appearances, and she was measured by the usual standard supposed to apply to all indiscriminately.

Laughter or weeping is, according to this measure, the outward sign of the inward feeling, and but few understand anything of the pride, of the secret suffering that conceals itself from the curious, indifferent eye, and only leaves its hiding-place when it meets with a warm, sympathizing heart.

Knowing nothing of the inward peace which has its source in a childlike trust in God and His wisdom, and by means of which the saddest heart can find a smile, they would have expected to see Emmy quiet and reserved and indifferent to everything not concerning her own interests;

and in such selfishness they would have fancied they detected signs of love. But the warm, strong, hopeful feelings which dwelt in her heart, and made her thankful and contented as regards the present, and surrounded the future with a rose-colored halo, the brightness of which was reflected in her face—such a love but few people understand; among Emmy's family none understood it.

But now I am speaking principally of the first half-year after Bruno's departure, when Emmy, according to agreement, had received a letter from him filling her heart with joyful hope, and when an active correspondence with Mrs. Eversberg kept her informed of all that related to him.

She knew that he had been received with extreme cordiality at New York by Mr. Siddons, who had invited him to his house as a guest, and who was already in treaty to provide him with employment in an agricultural undertaking in Michigan, of which Mr. Siddons' nephew was the head.

Bruno had written all this to her a few months after her arrival at New York, and the letter, enclosed in one to his mother, had reached Emmy without any impediment, and without the knowledge of any one in the house; and through the same channel she had written to him in reply much more fully and freely than he had ventured to write to her. This answer could hardly have reached New York when the sudden death of Mrs. Eversberg plunged Emmy into the deepest sorrow; for not only had she dearly loved her, but on Bruno's account she doubly mourned for her. His strong attachment to his mother, and his ardent wish to compensate her by a happier life in the future for the painful experiences of the past, were well known to Emmy. By her death, moreover, Emmy lost the source of tidings of Bruno, which had so often contributed to keep alive her courage and her hope; and this was the beginning of sorrowful

days for her. In the fulness of her heart she wrote to Bruno a long letter of consolation and support. She knew indeed that her letter must go through the hands of William de Graaff, as postmaster; but if the worst came to the worst, she was ready to endure a scolding from her stepmother, if she could but send Bruno a word of sympathy.

No one had ever prohibited her from writing to him, but for all that, it was not without alarm that she looked forward to his reply, which would probably be followed by such a prohibition, and would perhaps become a new source of unpleasantness between herself and her stepmother. Emmy's fears, however, were not realized. Bruno's answer did not arrive, and even the yearly letter agreed upon between them was wanting. Two years passed by, and neither word nor sign was received in Dilburg from Bruno Eversberg.

And these two years were indeed grievous years for Emmy; nevertheless her confidence in Bruno was so firmly fixed in her heart, that no suspicion of inconstancy on his part occurred to her; but when the second year had gone by without any news of him, the conviction began to grow upon her that he must be ill or dead, and that probably she would never hear anything more of him.

She suffered inexpressibly from these thoughts, and perhaps doubly so because she had no one to whom she could confide her suffering, and because she must feign composure whilst the bitterest sorrow was filling her heart.

For as long as she could Emmy had hoped for the best; then fear and hope had alternately struggled within her; insensibly hope lost ground more and more, and at last the conviction of the worst had become fixed in her mind. And it was just this slow process of conviction that caused the effect which it had upon her to

be less apparent to those around her. Gradually she had become quieter and paler, but too gradually for any one who saw her daily to notice it, and it was only on recalling her to one's mind as she had been on her first coming home to Dilburg, that one could see the change which had taken place in her. The shade of melancholy which had now come over her had indeed changed, but not lessened her beauty; and it will not be wondered at, that all this time she should not have passed unobserved by the gentlemen of Dilburg, more especially as it was pretty generally known that she had inherited a nice little fortune from the aunt by whom she had been brought up.

But the evident indifference with which she received their attentions had discouraged most of her admirers, until it happened that one bolder than the rest came to involve her in new annoyances.

As ill-luck would have it, the person in question was a young doctor who had shortly before established himself in Dilburg, and who often came to the Welters' house, thereby giving new life to Mina's hopes of marriage, till one fine day he astonished the unsuspecting Emmy by a written proposal to her, sent through her father. This time Mina de Graaff did not conceal her rage and disappointment, and from the first bestowed on Emmy the coarsest and most unmerited reproaches, accusing her of having, under the appearance of indifference, attracted the doctor to herself by artful coquetry.

It was a scene which wounded Emmy's delicacy most sensibly, and it was entirely opposed to her feelings of womanly dignity; but her disgust at such vulgarity fortunately restrained her from answering Mina as she deserved, and she contented herself with a contemptuous silence.

But the matter did not end here.

Although Mrs. Welters, as well as Mina, had thought that the attentions of Dr.

Berthold had been intended for her daughter, and although in a certain sense she shared in her daughter's disappointment, she found it, as matters now stood, too favorable an opportunity for getting quit of Emmy to acquiesce willingly in her refusal, and not to use every endeavor to bring about the marriage.

At first she adopted a motherly tone towards her; then she took her aside to place before her eyes all the advantages of this marriage; and one can imagine how her dislike towards Emmy increased when all this was without any result, and Emmy obstinately persevered in her refusal, on the ground that her regard for Dr. Berthold was certainly not of such a kind as to cause her to wish to become his wife.

Mrs. Welters, however, would have believed her character had she hereupon abandoned the matter, and Emmy saw through her plan entirely when she was called into her father's room in order to hear the marriage advocated by him also.

This time, however, Emmy was too sharp for her stepmother; for after Burgomaster Welters had delivered with the necessary gravity the lecture dictated by his wife, and Emmy had waited patiently till he had said all that he had been charged to say, she threw her arms round his neck, and exclaimed laughingly, while a tear glistened in her eye, "Now tell me plainly and once for all, dear papa, that you would gladly be quit of your Emmy."

But that was too much for the kind heart of Burgomaster Welters.

"Heaven forbid, my child!" said he, touched and alarmed.

"Well, if it is not so, papa—if you wish to keep me a little longer—and I wish to stay a little longer with you—then Dr. Berthold may just as well seek for a wife elsewhere."

This was too good logic to be refuted, and the conversation from which Mrs. Welters had promised herself so much,

ended in a confidential chat between father and daughter, for which the opportunity seldom occurred, and they talked chiefly of past times, in which the stepmother had no share.

In about half an hour Emmy was about to leave the room with a light heart, when, with her hand already on the handle of the door, she was called back by her father. When she returned to his chair, the friendly expression of his face had given place to one of timidity and confusion ; his small eyes seemed more and more concealed by his fat cheeks, and the fat cheeks themselves had assumed a higher color than usual, as, rubbing nervously his little fat hands, he said somewhat hesitatingly to Emmy—

"Look here, Emmy, if mamma should ask—that is, if she asks me, you know—I shall merely say that we talked over the matter for a long time, and it must be stated that I also do not approve of your decision. Do you understand?"

Yes ; Emmy understood it all only too well, and when she got up-stairs into her own room she shed many tears.

It was as if, by her father's words, she at once comprehended that even in him she neither had nor would have any support in the difficulties of her life, which seemed to increase every day. But this at least Emmy learnt from this disagreeable affair, that in future she must be more careful in her intercourse with young men, who naturally could not know that she had no heart to give, and that any preference they might have for her would be quite thrown away. She thought over all the gentlemen who came to the house, but in the behavior of none of them could she find anything suspicious, at least for the moment, without the greatest conceit on her part.

Once, however, put on her guard, very few days passed before she became aware that the behavior of William de Graaff towards herself had become strange and inex-

plicable. Her first sensation on making this discovery was a sort of shivering.

The aversion which she had felt for him from the very first she had not yet wholly overcome, but for a long time he had taken, or at least had seemed to take, so little notice of her, and she had herself so much to think about, that she had paid little attention to him, and her thoughts had never dwelt upon him in the least.

Always quiet and reserved, he had been quieter than ever the last year or two, and only now, after the proposal of Dr. Berthold, which was naturally known in the family, an excitement and restlessness had come over him, which had made Emmy observant of him. She also thought she had observed that his eyes would rest long and searchingly on her ; sometimes she felt his eyes as she sat bent over her work, and now and then when she looked up she encountered that strange green light, which gave a curious expression to the pale gray eyes, and left Emmy in the uncertainty whether it was love or hatred they expressed ; but in either case they made her shudder, without her being able to account for the feeling.

For as long as possible she hoped that she had been mistaken, and that she should be spared from a new trouble in connection with her family ; but the hope did not last long, for she could not fail to perceive that William evidently sought for an opportunity to speak to her alone.

For whole weeks she studiously avoided him, but at last her good common sense so far got the better of her fears that she began to see how much better it would be to give him the opportunity of saying what he wished to say, rather than to embitter him by an avoidance which, in the long run, she would not be able to keep up. And yet she was alarmed when, one day, as she was sitting as usual at work in the drawing-room, no one else being present, she saw William come in at an hour which to him was very unusual.

With an almost involuntary movement, perhaps from the force of habit during the last few weeks, she got up from her chair as if to leave the room ; yet, instantly recollecting herself, she resumed her place as calmly as possible, although with the appearance of calmness she could not help her heightened color nor prevent her heart from beating almost audibly.

She bent lower over her work to conceal her emotion, and when she looked up again, William was standing straight before her, with his arms folded, gazing at her with the same strange expression which had so often disturbed her.

"Pray go out of the room, Emmy," he said, coldly, "if I am so hateful to you that you cannot be alone with me ; do not stay out of politeness. I am not used to anything better from you."

These words wounded Emmy's kind heart. Quick as lightning the thought shot through her head, "If my fears have no ground, if I have avoided him without reason all these weeks, and have offended him?" Strengthened by this thought, she looked up at him with an open, honest expression, simply saying, "No, William, it is not because you are hateful to me that I have avoided you ; I am sorry you think that."

"Why, then?"

A deep blush spread over Emmy's face at the question to which her words had unintentionally led, and which she found difficult to answer.

"Why, then, have you avoided me?" repeated William, in a passionate, angry voice, when she hesitated to reply.

Now it was lucky for Emmy that, although in trifles she was easily driven out of the field, she was brave and undaunted in matters of importance, and now that while William addressed her in so angry and ill-mannered a way, she recovered her calmness in proportion as he became more violent.

Since she had been so imprudent as to give occasion to this question she would answer it straightforwardly.

"If I have avoided you, William, I have done so with a good object, because I feared that things would be spoken between us which might lessen our good understanding as brother and sister."

"So you have done me the honor of ranking me amongst your unfortunate admirers," he said, laughing scornfully, and with the words again driving the blood into Emmy's cheeks.

Here, however, her patience came to an end, and without vouchsafing him any further answer she laid down her work and got up to leave the room.

But before she had gone two steps she was brought back to her seat by William, with a rough grasp which almost gave her pain, whilst he exclaimed, "No, by Heaven, Emmy, you shall not leave me thus ! I will now know how I stand with you ; I will know whether henceforth I am to be your friend or foe."

Emmy had sunk back in the chair in which he had compelled her to sit down. Looking him bravely in the face, whilst a contemptuous smile played on her lips, she said calmly and coldly, "May I know what are the conditions of your friendship?"

His anger now seemed to give way. The expression of his countenance changed to deep melancholy, and his voice, hitherto loud and hoarse, took a softer tone.

"Forgive me, Emmy ; I am a fool to speak to you thus, but you don't know how bitterly you have grieved me, and how much I have suffered latterly."

When at these words the expression of Emmy's face became softer, and she did not interrupt him or make any attempt to get up from her chair, he went on, "Look, Emmy : as long as I can recollect I have been shunned and repelled by every one ; from my earliest youth—when as an ugly child I was caressed by no

one except my mother—made much of by no one. This experience makes me hard and bitter. I know very well that I am not an agreeable man, and thus far, too, not a good man either. There exists in my heart a grudge and bitterness against the world, which began with injustice towards me when I did not deserve to be repelled. I know that I have no friends—that no one cares for me—but this was a matter of indifference to me till I learnt to know you. Then, Emmy, I felt for the first time that nature had used me ill, that even the gift of making myself agreeable was denied to me. I observed how I made an unfavorable impression on you at our very first meeting, and all the time since you have been here I have been endeavoring to efface it. . . . All this time I have suffered so much that I have almost hated you. Your heart, Emmy, is too gentle and too good to understand this feeling; but in my nature there is no middle course. I must love or hate with all the strength and passion which exists in me.

"This conversation will be decisive as regards my whole future life. You have an influence over me such as no one has ever possessed before. If you could love me, from that hour I should be a totally different and certainly a better man. You can speak the charmed word which will release my soul from the bad passions which possess it. My heart longs for a heart which can love and understand it, for one being in this wide world who does not thrust me away as every one else has done."

Emmy had listened patiently, without any effort to stop him, to what William said.

The increasing passionateness of his words had produced a peculiarly intimidating effect upon her, that paralyzed her tongue, and even suppressed the natural compassion which his words might have awakened.

It was so strange to hear such passionate language from him who had always been apparently so calm, so quiet and reserved; it was so unnatural to sound, as it were, the very depths of the heart of one whose exterior never betrayed the slightest emotion.

When he was silent Emmy understood that he now expected an answer from her, and she forced herself, with some difficulty, to say hesitatingly, "I fear, William, that you expect from me what I cannot fulfil; if I could but tell you how sorry I am that you have hoped for it! Believe me, that if I have prepared a disappointment for you, it has been involuntarily and unwittingly; but"—

"Some one else possesses my heart"—say it more plainly, and without going round-about," broke in William, in an angry tone.

"That is a matter which does not concern you, William," said Emmy, coolly; "that is not a point on which I am accountable to you, or respecting which you have any right to inquire. Let it be enough for you that I cannot be to you what you wish."

"Then it is always that accursed beggar, Eversberg, who stands in my way!" exclaimed William, bursting out into a strong emotion, whilst his fist came down upon the table with a hard blow.

But Emmy's calmness and gentleness were now exhausted; at this abuse of Bruno she started up from her chair, and with flashing eyes she cried out:

"You may call Bruno a beggar; but no one can know him to be otherwise than good and noble, and that is more than can be said of you, William!"

"No, Emmy; I am not good, and sooner or later you will find that I am not noble. You have disdained my love; well, then, from this time forth look upon me as your enemy; as long as I live I will remember this hour, and I swear that

some time or other I will have my revenge on you. Years may pass before I can obtain my revenge; but if you think I shall give it up, you will be mistaken. When the day comes for you to be so wretched and unfortunate that no one in the world is able to help you, then think of this hour."

"You are a bad man, William, and I believe you are capable of anything, but I do not fear you. If man cannot protect me from you, God will. The hate which dwells in a heart like yours is more welcome to me than your love. I defy your vengeance, and I laugh at your hate."

"Very well, Emmy; but do not forget that he who has the last laugh has the best laugh," said William, with a false expression on his lips, as he left the room; and Emmy remained behind in deep emotion.

For with all her intrepidity, she felt really uneasy when her excitement had gone off; she could not disguise from herself that she had done wrong in being so much carried away by her anger, and thereby embittering William, whilst kind words might have had an opposite effect upon him. And she knew also that it was his sneering words respecting Bruno which had caused her not only to forget herself, but to lose sight of prudence.

She determined, however, to speak once more to him on this subject, and as far as possible to disarm him by conciliatory expressions; but, to her great disappointment, the opportunity never presented itself; as she had before avoided him, he now avoided her.

As far as regarded his attitude and behavior, Emmy might have imagined to herself that the whole scene between them had been a dream, and it did seem to her exactly like a dream when she saw him in the evenings sitting in silence among them all with a book before him, just as he had used to do in former years.

Frequently Emmy thought that it was simply folly to attach so much importance to William's words, evidently spoken in anger; but now and then, when she looked up unexpectedly and met his gaze, she could not but observe with a cold shiver the strange green light which flashed from his eyes, and gave them an expression of glowing hatred.

But Emmy had not much opportunity of thinking the matter over, for shortly after the above dialogue with William, Burgomaster Welters became ill, and died a few days later, as I have already stated.

This also was a great blow to Emmy. Although from her long absence from her home, and the insignificant part which Burgomaster Welters had filled in his own house, he might not indeed have occupied a very prominent place in his daughter's thoughts, yet she had never experienced anything but kindness from him, and she deeply felt his death as a severance of the only tie which bound her to the family in which, after his death, she had hardly any more right than a stranger.

Matters stood thus with regard to Emmy Welters when, three months after her father's death, I again conduct you into the family circle, and I think you will agree with me that her position could not be called an enviable one in any respect, and that it is no wonder that the cheerfulness and lightheartedness which characterized her on our first acquaintance have vanished. And now, after this necessary retrospect into past years, I will resume the broken thread of my narrative.

CHAPTER XVI.

COUSIN SIWORD.*

"And what says Siword Hiddema, mama?" asked Mina, letting her work drop to inquire about the letter which Mrs.

* In the original this name retains the Friesian spelling, "Sjoerd."

Welters had just received and opened. Mrs. Welters did not answer immediately; she read the letter through, evidently with increasing interest, till she exclaimed at last, "Well, this is news! Only think, Mina, Siword Hiddema is in treaty for the purchase of Sollingen; he is coming to stay here, in order to be near the estate, and he brings Seyna with him."

"Well, as far as I am concerned he might have left us in peace," said Mina, in her usual complaining tone. "It is a great trouble to have such a little child in the house."

"But Seyna can't be so very little now, Mina. Let us see; it must be full seven years since Siword was here. I know we were just keeping your twenty-fourth birthday; don't you remember?"

"No, I can't say I do, and I don't know what this has to do with Seyna's age," answered Mina, in a surly tone.

"Yes, seven years ago," resumed Mrs. Welters, who had continued to reckon it up in her thoughts without heeding Mina's answer. "Now he was married a few months after he left us, and hardly a year afterwards his daughter was born. She was three years old when her mother died, and next autumn that will be three years ago. How time goes!"

"Whom have we to thank for that philosophical remark, mamma dear?" asked Elizabeth, who at that moment appeared at the door on the arm of her young fair-haired lieutenant.

"What were you saying, Mina? Is Siword Hiddema coming to stay here with little Seyna? Well, that is nice. Emmy, do you know Cousin Siword?"

During the whole conversation Emmy had been trying to recall some association in her mind with regard to Siword Hiddema, but at these words of Elizabeth a light dawned upon her. "Oh, I know now, Elizabeth," she said with a smile; "Cousin Siword must be the person of

whom one of your letters which I got at Amsterdam was so full."

"And no wonder," said Elizabeth, laughing; "for in those days Siword and pretty Lotty were my ideals of earthly perfection, and my letters might well be overflowing with them. You need not look so jealous, Fik" (Fik was a corruption of Lieutenant Smit's Christian name, Peter, of the derivation of which Elizabeth alone had the secret); "pretty Lotty is the great doll, still up-stairs, which Cousin Siword brought me, and which was a great bond of friendship between us. Where does he write from, mamma? From Germany?"

"No; this letter is from Leeuwarden; he seems to have passed a few months there with the parents of his late wife. I think his daughter has been there all the time he was in Germany; but, as he tells us, he wishes to settle for good in his own country. He recollects Sollingen from the drive we took on Mina's birthday, and now that he has seen the sale announced, he has written direct to the notary; but naturally he wishes to take a look at the place before he makes a bid for it."

A few minutes afterwards Mrs. Welters left the room. An unusual activity prevailed in the house all day; the spare room was put in order for the expected guest, and a crib placed in an adjoining dressing-room for the little girl.

Three months of mourning, with the consequent quiet and retirement, had had a depressing effect on most members of the Welters family, and the prospect of receiving guests cheered them up.

Mrs. Welters went about the house with her wonted activity. Mina looked more contented, and gave more friendly answers than was her habit; Elizabeth was incessant in her stories about Cousin Siword, and in her conjectures with reference to his daughter; whilst all this hurry and excitement at last awakened a natural curiosity in Emmy as to the expected guest.

But before Siword Hiddema enters upon my tale, I think I may be excused a slight digression in order to lay before you who and what is this new acquaintance.

That Siword Hiddema was a Frieslander is an obvious fact, which his name has already sufficiently announced; but except his birth he had small right to that nationality, for he was taken away from Friesland before he was short-coated, and never set foot on Friesland soil again until he was quite grown up.

He was the son of a sister of Mr. de Graaff, Mrs. Welters' first husband. This sister had married a Mr. Hiddema, who died before their child was born; and she also dying three months after its birth, the child was left an orphan.

Thus Siword Hiddema had never known his parents; and as Mr. de Graaff was at that time unmarried, and the child had no relations on his mother's side, it was necessary to place him with strangers, and to purchase with money the maternal care which he needed.

The little Siword had not fared amiss. The clergyman's widow who took him was a good-hearted woman, and let him want for nothing; but she, too, died when he was hardly three years old, and a new home had to be found for the poor little orphan—poor because he was without that which makes every child rich—parents and a parental home; but in other respects, as the sole heir to a considerable fortune and to a family name highly respected in Friesland, he was rich enough in all that the world covets and values.

When he was five years old, his uncle discovered that he had fallen into bad hands, and, fearing to try any new experiment, he placed the little boy at a well-known boarding-school, where he remained until he was entered as a student at the Leyden University.

From the time he was ten years old, when his uncle married, he passed every

vacation with his uncle's family, by whom he was regarded almost as a son of the house.

He stayed many years at the University. Although studying for a degree in letters, he attended besides many lectures which did not belong to this course, and thus gained much general knowledge, which with him was not merely superficial. Gifted with good abilities and a clear head, study was to him an agreeable occupation, almost a necessity; but, far from becoming a book-worm or neglecting his advantages of youth and fortune, he had, without indulging in extravagance, understood as well how to enjoy his life at the University as to turn it to good account. He did not leave the University till he was seven-and-twenty; some years were then spent in travelling, and he had already reached the age of four-and-thirty when, during a visit to Leewarden in Friesland, he made the acquaintance of a young lady who a few months later became his wife.

Owing to her delicate health, which after the birth of a daughter degenerated into that of a confirmed invalid, this marriage did not altogether fulfil Siword Hiddema's expectations. Travelling from one watering-place to another, he at last brought his wife home to her family, only to die. A year later, he left his daughter, a child of four years old, under their care, and sought in renewed study to get over the loss of his wife, whom he had loved and mourned for with all his heart.

Agriculture was now his chief study, and the intended purchase of the lordship of Sollingen, with the large farms belonging to it, was, no doubt, in connection with the two years' course of lectures which he attended at the Polytechnic School of Hanover.

Seven years have passed, as Mrs. Welters informed us, since that last visit to Dilburg, when he had found the widow of his Uncle de Graaff married to Burgomaster Welters,

in whose house he met with the same hearty reception which he had formerly received in the De Graaff family.

But at that time Emmy was still in Amsterdam with her aunt, and consequently Siward Hiddema had thus far been unknown to her, and he himself had seldom heard her name mentioned.

On the day fixed the expected guests arrived at Dilburg.

When Emmy saw him for the first time, as he entered the room leading his little girl by the hand, an involuntary smile came to her lips.

How is it that we sometimes form such distorted ideas of men and things without any reasonable grounds?

How was it that Emmy had represented to herself that the much discussed Cousin Hiddema was an old man?

It must have been from the narratives of Elizabeth, who spoke of Cousin Siword as of a grandfather, and in her eyes, I believe, he did possess that venerable distinction.

This much is certain, that the broad-shouldered man of forty who now stood before Emmy belied in every respect her previous conception of him. His figure was tall and stately; he had dark curly hair, regular features, and brown eyes, which had a half-serious, half-sad expression; and this, as well as the deep lines on his forehead, bore witness to the grief he had suffered. His firm determined mouth was shaded by a dark moustache, and seldom relaxed into a smile; but when it did the whole countenance changed; the handsome white teeth showed themselves with a merry expression, which was probably the prevailing expression of his face before the seriousness of life had set a stamp on it.

Such was Siword Hiddema, but, as we are still speaking of his exterior, I must not forget its chief characteristic—namely, that it was *distingué*. He had that about him which made one recognise him as a gentleman in any dress or in any disguise.

It was not with him as with many men—a kind of varnish which is put on with their kid gloves as they cross the threshold of their houses, and on their return home is put by again for the next occasion.

No; with Siword Hiddema there was no counterfeit, but genuine coin; no part learnt by heart, but an inborn nature, which was not of a kind to disguise itself, but kept true to him at his domestic hearth, and towards the greatest as well as to the most insignificant of his fellow-creatures.

Holding her father's hand tightly with her tiny soft fingers, as if the grasp gave her a moral support against all the strange faces, little Seyna stood by him, her long eyelashes drooping over her blue eyes, which were fixed on the ground, and only looked up shyly when her father told her that she must give her hand to Aunt Welters, Cousin Mina, and Cousin William, one after another, and wish them good day.

Although the lips of her finely-cut mouth might be more disposed to cry than to laugh, her fat round cheeks, in which her little turn-up nose was sunk, might be crimson with confusion, and her pretty voice scarcely audible, yet one could see at once that the child was accustomed to obey the gentle but decided words of her father.

When she came up to Emmy with her greeting, he said, with a smile, half to Emmy and half to the child—

“And what are we to call this young lady, Seyna?”

The child looked up gravely at Emmy, as if expecting her to decide the question, while Emmy said, laughingly—

“I think, Cousin Emmy; what do you think?”

“Of course, Cousin Siword,” exclaimed Elizabeth, “how could you call my sister anything else?”

“With all my heart,” he answered, offering his hand to Emmy; “and if I did not do so at once, it was because I was not

at all prepared to find another cousin here. However, I recollect very well having heard of you when I was here before."

"Do you know, Siword, that that was seven years ago?" interposed Mrs. Welters, and with this a conversation ensued, which ran over earlier and later times, and afforded inexhaustible matter for all present, with the exception of Emmy, who naturally could not speak of former times in connection with their guest.

Whilst she was sitting by in silence, she made use of the opportunity to attract little Seyna to her.

For the first half-hour the child had not stirred from her father's chair, but stood leaning against his knee, whilst from this place of refuge she took an observation with her large eyes of those present. Her looks were fixed longest in the direction of Emmy; but I must add that close to Emmy, who was sitting at a little work-table with her bead-work, for which there was no room at the large table, was to be found an old acquaintance of Siword Hid-dema—pretty Lotty. This old acquaintance, much disfigured by the tooth of time, was duly recognized by Siword, and immediately became the subject of much merriment between him and Elizabeth, and, notwithstanding the evident decay into which Lotty's once beautiful dress and fair cheeks had fallen, even in spite of a nose gnawed by rats, it seemed still to possess sufficient charms to attract the gaze of the little girl.

Whilst the others were conversing, Emmy asked, "Won't Seyna come and look at the pretty doll?" and the child hesitated some time between the temptation to go and her shyness; but at last she came nearer, step by step, and before an hour had passed was sitting very contentedly between Emmy and Lotto, making a bead ring for papa, and, while thus occupied, asking Emmy all sorts of confidential questions.

When the ring was finished and fastened up by Emmy, it was taken by Seyna to her father, who to her great delight actually put it on his finger, and then he all at once held out his watch and said, "Dear child, it is quite time; ask Aunt Welters if the maid may put you to bed, and then you will go to sleep, won't you? Papa will come up-stairs presently."

The cheerful expression of her countenance vanished instantly at these words; her lips began to pout; but one look from her father was enough to check the rising tears. Obediently she went round, directly her father told her, to wish good night to every one, not forgetting the doll, and had just got as far as Emmy when the maid entered the room to take her to bed. Emmy could not help being flattered and touched when, at the sight of another strange face, the little girl pressed against her closely, as she whispered, "Will Cousin Emmy take Seyna to bed?" Emmy willingly laid down her work, and the tiny hand was put trustingly in hers as she got up to leave the room. When Emmy had reached the door with the child, Siword had already come forward to open it for her.

"Take care, cousin," he said, with a half-smile, "that in order to win this little damsel you do not place a burden about your neck. Her theory is: Give me a finger, and I'll soon have the whole hand."

"Well, she is right; that is the theory of the conquerors of the world," answered Emmy playfully, as she looked kindly at the child, who just now had let go her hand to cover that of her father with kisses.

Emmy stopped a moment at the door, to give him an opportunity of returning these caresses, as she naturally expected he would do; but he limited himself to putting his hand upon the dark, curly head, and again warning the child to go to sleep quietly, and not to make herself troublesome to Emmy.

Emmy then went up-stairs.

The child willingly allowed herself to be undressed by Emmy, and, with amusing activity and neatness, folded up her clothes and laid them carefully on a chair.

Thus far in her life Emmy had had very little to do with children, and she felt inexpressibly attracted to the little daughter of Siword Hiddema. The round, rosy face, her gentle voice, and her great blue eyes full of childish innocence had an indescribable charm for her. She felt flattered by the preference and trustfulness of the child, who chattered incessantly about grandmamma and Aunt Christine, who had always put her to bed when she lived with her grandmamma. It filled her with involuntary emotion when the child knelt down beside her little bed to utter a short, childish prayer, and afterwards had scarcely laid her head upon the pillow when the closed eyes and the regular breathing through the half-parted lips showed that she was asleep.

Emmy gently loosened the little hand which had held her finger, kissed the white forehead, and remained a long time deep in thought sitting by the side of the crib.

Although in the distance she could hear the talking and laughing in the parlor below, she did not feel the slightest wish to join in it. She felt as if in the midst of merriment she was a stranger, who by her very presence disturbed the circle of old acquaintances.

Although of late she had been mostly in a sorrowful state of mind, she hardly knew herself to what to ascribe the feeling of deep depression, still less the sensation of solitude and forlornness, which now overcame her.

The sleeping child whom she was watching reminded her of her own childhood, when she had slept in the same crib in the same little room, next to the bedroom of her parents. She thought how, perhaps,

more than once, her mother had sometimes watched her asleep as she was now watching this child, and how her mother could never have imagined with what a heavy and sorrowful heart her daughter would sit in the same place. All the scenes of her youth passed gradually before her—the happy years previous to her mother's death, the happy years with Aunt Emmy, who had made good all she had lost in her mother. She also called to mind how full of hope and bright expectation she had been, when, after long absence, she had come back to her father's house, and all the expectations which, in a still greater degree, she had cherished of a future with Bruno Eversberg.

And it had all resulted in sorrow and disappointment.

In her father's house she was nothing more than a stranger who was tolerated. Bruno was dead, or, even if it were not so, it was not likely after this long interval that she should ever hear anything more of him. Otto was married, and she seldom had an opportunity of seeing him, whilst she did not feel sufficiently at home in his house to go there often; and Elizabeth also in a year's time would be married, and with the first change of the regiment would leave Dilburg; and then she would be left behind alone with her step-mother, who had never shown her any love or cordiality; with Mina, who hated her, and William, who had sworn vengeance against her. Alas! it was no wonder Emmy's heart was heavy and sorrowful; no wonder that at these thoughts the tears rolled down her cheeks, and that a painful lamentation came from her heart—"Bruno! if you had been spared to me, how different it would all have been!"

It was impossible for Emmy to go downstairs in this mood. She sought her own room, where the moon threw its clear light through the open window, and where she sat down to let the cool evening wind

blow away the traces of her tears, and to calm her agitated mind by contemplating the repose of nature in the outspread garden below.

But now that her thoughts had taken this course, it was difficult to stop them. The moonlight brought back to her recollection the evening when Bruno had spoken to her of his love, and all that had happened subsequently—things which she had thought over a thousand times, which she had brought before her mind in all their smallest details, and of which she was never weary of thinking.

For sometime past, however, a new idea had fixed itself in her mind—namely, the possibility of ascertaining something certain about Bruno.

If she knew for certain that Bruno was dead, she might possibly be calmer and more at peace than now; for, in spite of the conviction which she felt of his death, a faint hope still lingered in her heart that all would yet be cleared up, and that perhaps Bruno would unexpectedly appear before her eyes.

It was, in truth, but a faint, lingering hope, but it still lived on, and was sustained by the elasticity of youth, which never will despair as long as there is the least glimmer of light in the darkness.

This idea inspired Emmy again with redoubled strength. There was one expedient—and she often regretted she had not sooner resorted to it—and that was to take Otto into her confidence—to communicate fully to him the tie between Bruno and herself, and to leave it to him to find the means of procuring information respecting Bruno's return. Her resolution now became fully ripe.

She would go and see Otto at his chambers the next morning, and then she would know in a few weeks' time whether it was hope or fear which had spoken to her with the voice of truth.

Her spirits rose as she came to this deci-

sion, and she left her room with a much lighter heart than when she had entered it, and went down-stairs to join the family circle.

On entering the drawing-room, she found the lamp lighted and the party increased by the addition of Lieutenant Smit and of Otto, who had just come to welcome Siword Hiddema, and who was already in close conversation with him; not so close, however, but that Siword remarked Emmy's return, and, placing a chair for her by the table, he said, "Seyna has not detained you too long, I hope?"

"Oh no! the child went to sleep immediately. Well, Otto, how are you? Is Celine well?"

"Quite well, thank you, Emmy."

There was something short and forced in the tone in which Otto replied, and turning immediately to Siword, he said, "You will find much changed here, Siword."

"Yes, Otto, all is changed, and one does not stand still one's self. As I sit here, and see you all around me, I could almost think that the last seven years have been a dream; and yet after an absence, whether short or long, one finds on one's return that all is different to what one expected. It seems as if one's mind were incapable of receiving from mere description a lasting impression of a change without actually seeing it. I knew that I should not find your father here, but yet his empty place seemed to me on my arrival strange and unnatural. I knew that Elizabeth was engaged to be married, and yet I could not picture her to myself otherwise than in a frock and pinafore, and with a doll in her arms. I knew that you were a lawyer in full practice and a married man, yet I could only think of a young student who was then at home for his vacation."

"Yes, so it is," answered Otto; "but when the first less agreeable impression of these changes has passed away, the old associations come back to one again in a new

form, and the recollection of the past loses itself pleasantly in the present."

So they chatted on. All sorts of people whom Siword had known in Dilburg were talked over, and the various changes which had taken place. Emmy now and then joined in the conversation ; but she became silent and bent lower over her work when she heard Mrs. Welters say, "With no one has it gone so hard as with the Eversbergs. You must remember that family ; they were living close by the last time you were here, Siword."

"Yes, certainly, aunt, I recollect them. By chance I heard the whole sad story this morning in the train from a naval officer, who was travelling with me, and who had once stayed with the Eversbergs. He entered into conversation with me when he heard I was going to Dilburg. What a melancholy end these people had. I still recollect the young fellow, who had then just made his first voyage as a cadet. What a fearful discovery it must have been for him."

"Yes ; the son then took his discharge from the navy," added Mrs. Welters ; "but he went to America, and no news of him has ever since been received at Dilburg."

"Well, aunt," resumed Siword, "then I can give you some news of him. He has succeeded very well in an agricultural undertaking somewhere in Canada, and has besides married a very rich American young lady. The naval officer with whom I travelled had been a comrade of young Eversberg's, and had seen him at the opera in New York with his wife and father-in-law. Unluckily, he had not caught sight of him till the last act, and then not being quite sure, he had to wait till the end before he could ask the gentleman who was sitting next him whether he was mistaken in the man. From this person he then heard the news of the marriage ; but, as he was himself obliged to set sail the next day, he had no time to visit Eversberg. In going out

from the opera, however, he had an opportunity in passing of congratulating and shaking hands with Eversberg, who had evidently hardly recognized him when Eversberg reached his carriage that was waiting, and helped his wife into it. She was a beautiful woman, according to the testimony of the naval officer."

Many exclamations of surprise and wonder followed the news thus imparted by Siword ; but Otto merely said gravely and warmly, "I am glad he is so prosperous, and I hope he will be happy, for Bruno Eversberg was a fine, good fellow, who bore himself like a man under the misfortunes which came upon him, and deserves the respect of every one, notwithstanding the shame which his father had brought upon him."

Hardly any one of those present said a word.

Emmy's head bowed deeper and deeper over her work, and her hands went on mechanically, whilst the unexpected shock which Siword's words had given her drove every drop of blood to her heart, and made it beat and thump with painful force.

In her ears there was a rushing sound as of the sea ; a cloud came before her eyes, and she would certainly have lost consciousness had she not been roused by an instinctive feeling that the eyes of some of the party were fixed upon her, and with cold curiosity were probing her wound.

She felt the triumphant look in William's eyes ; the cold, curious gaze of her step-mother ; and her feelings of self-respect and her pride wrestled with the cruel pain in her betrayed heart, and were at length victorious.

Short but fierce was the strife.

When Emmy lifted up her head, her eyes sparkled as with an internal fire, which gave a heightened color to her cheeks ; calmly and steadily she met the inquisitive gaze of her step-mother and the mocking smile on William's lips, and when the con-

versation turned on another subject, she took an active part in it, and laughed and talked as she had not done for years.

From the great excitement into which she had been thrown this cost her but little effort after the first moment.

She felt equal to anything, if only she need not be alone ; if she could but stifle within her the voice which seemed to loose from her hold the whole world—her life, her hope, her promise, and her trust—the voice which made her heart rebel against all mankind in that one sentence, “Bruno Eversberg is married.”

It was fortunate for Emmy that the evening did not last much longer, not an hour longer, or the unnatural tension would have given place to a reaction which would have exposed in one way or other the part she was playing. But before it had come to this the family had dispersed, and Emmy had sought the solitude of her own room, where none could witness her agitation. Her sorrow was, however, no ordinary sorrow, and therefore found no tears in which to express itself.

Her heart was filled with a bitterness which, for a moment at all events, stifled the feeling of sorrow.

A dull despair made itself master of her soul. Her thoughts whirled round in a painful confusion.

Such a short time before, on that very same evening, she would have considered Bruno’s death as the greatest conceivable woe. How thankful would she now be if she could think of him as one who had died loving her and true to her to the end !

Now that Bruno was unfaithful to her, whom could she trust or rely upon in this world ? Faithless and cowardly he had been, for he had wanted the courage to confess his unfaithfulness. And for this unworthy man she had suffered so much. Of him, the husband of another woman, she had thought day and night ; she had lived for him ; she had trusted and fixed

her hope in him, and for him had prayed so earnestly.

Poor Emmy ! it was a wretched night, the most wretched that she had ever had in her life. Rest was impossible to her. For hours she walked up and down the room, feeling that to go to bed in this agitated frame of mind was out of the question. In vain she sought comfort and support in religion ; in vain she fell on her knees and prayed for calmness and submission, with her burning head buried in the pillows of her bed. Her heart was, as it were, petrified, and could not join in what her lips uttered spontaneously in the sore distress of her soul.

When the first glimmer of morning found its way into her room, she threw herself on her bed, still dressed ; and, overpowered by fatigue, she fell into a light slumber, and a dream or vision—she could never afterwards recall it distinctly—came to her ; it seemed as if, in the faint light of dawn, the spirit of her old aunt hovered over her ; as if a cold hand were laid on her burning forehead, while the bitterness of her heart melted away at the sound of words often and often spoken by her aunt—words which even now served as a balm to Emmy’s deeply wounded soul, as they sounded in her ears with the old familiar tone—

“Even what comes to you through man comes from God.”

CHAPTER XVII.

WHERE TWO ARE SQUABBLING, BOTH ARE IN THE WRONG.

I HOPE my readers still possess sufficient interest, or at least sufficient curiosity, concerning the *dramatis personæ* of my narrative to have observed that there are two individuals whom I have omitted to mention in my summary of the events of the last two years.

But I have not forgotten Otto and

Celine ; and certainly for them, as for every one else, it is seldom that any two years can be said to be so important as the first two years of marriage, which not unfrequently determine the whole after-life.

Happy, if the first two years have served to draw closer the bond of love which united them, by the welding together of two hearts and two souls, finding in this union the completion, as it were, of their respective selves ; if they have learned to share together all their joys and sorrows, and are yet fully sensible of the fact that, however divergent may be their characters, their mutual influence has had an ennobling effect on both.

Unhappy, if the pair of human beings who have bound themselves together by their own will and choice have gradually made the discovery thus early in their married life that they do not suit ; if their tempers constantly clash ; if their union at its outset did not rest on a foundation of mutual respect, or if this foundation is felt every day to be sinking under their feet ; if the glow which should warm their whole life languishes for want of fuel, and only flares up again now and then for a moment, but has no vitality in it ; if these two souls turn away each to hide its sorrow from the other, and any community of ideas, any common joys, become impossible ; if the two poor fettered hearts struggle against the chains which bind them, and lower themselves and each other by dislike and disputes. Yes, then it is that sorrow is the unbidden guest seated at the fireside. Then joy flickers like a lifeless glimmer. It is then that a chilling atmosphere pervades the house, which paralyzes all noble sentiments and emotions.

And what is the key to the numberless dramas in everyday life—the solution of these enigmas of wasted happiness of lives, where so often all the circumstances lead one to expect a better result ? The answer

may be given in these few words, “ They were not suited to each other.” Each taken separately a good half, but both together a misshapen whole. So it was with Otto and Celine.

Celine undoubtedly had never been so near the truth as when she said to Otto, “ You and I are not suited to each other ;” and for both of them the day had long since dawned when these words had forced themselves upon their recollection as a terrible truth. I feel no wish to enter upon the details of that unhappy married life, but I owe it to you to state the principal features of it.

I can begin by speaking of the few happy days which the young married pair spent at Brussels—days of perfect felicity as regards Otto, and contented calmness as regards Celine. But these days were few in number, and were brought to an end unexpectedly by the news from Dilburg that, since the departure of his mistress, Cæsar had refused all food, and that probably Celine would not find him alive unless she returned home immediately.

Now, one can very well conceive that it could not be agreeable for a young married man to give up his wedding tour for the sake of a dog ; but Otto, nevertheless, would have been wiser had he acquiesced more readily in Celine’s wish. But it must be added in his excuse that, being very indifferent to animals himself, Otto could not, perhaps, form any idea of Celine’s affection for the poor beast, which in her solitary life was almost a friend and companion.

Celine’s flood of tears at the news annoyed Otto. The hasty departure insisted upon by Celine was preceded by a warm discussion between husband and wife, which Celine on her side pushed to extremities, using passionate words, forgotten perhaps by herself as soon as uttered, but which wounded Otto deeply. And thus the first spark was kindled. From that

moment every difference of opinion caused a dispute, and every dispute a quarrel. And yet all might have been well—at least if not well, better—if the intercourse with the Dilburgers had not placed a new stumbling-block in the way of their domestic happiness.

For, with all the sound understanding and clear judgment which Otto displayed in his profession, there clung to him, owing to his education and long residence in Dilburg, a certain country-town narrowness of ideas, which from the very first made him introduce Celine to his acquaintance with considerable misgiving and anxiety of mind.

The public opinion of Dilburg was Otto's spectre. It had grown up with him from his earliest youth, and had so undermined his courage that he had no longer the power of looking it boldly in the face.

Instead of letting Celine appear to his acquaintance in all the natural peculiarity of her nature, as she had charmed him and won his love, he would willingly have transformed her into one of the most everyday kind of women of Dilburg society.

It was quite an embarrassment to him that Celine was so entirely different from all the others. He blushed whenever she offended against rules of etiquette which she had never known ; he was dissatisfied when she sat by in silence whilst the ladies were talking of dress or household matters ; he was restless when he heard her talk to the gentlemen about horses, dogs, and sporting, and when the sparkling of her eyes showed how she entered into the subject with all her heart and soul.

On their return home it was seldom that Otto had not some remark to make to Celine on her behavior. When the lady of the house addressed her, she should have stood up ; that was the correct thing. She ought not to have stayed chattering so long with that young man ; to say to another lady that she was sure she could not be

fond of walking because she was so fat, and to decline an invitation with the downright real reason that she had no wish to accept it, was neither becoming nor polite ; and so on in endless variety.

Thus Otto, with the best intentions, was like an ignorant gardener, who, having a rose-bush, which by careful tending, transplanting, and pruning, might become a fragrant and perfect rose, tries by grafting to turn it into a camellia.

To turn Celine into an ordinary European woman was quite as impossible as to convert a rose into a camellia ; and that Otto should wish to try this experiment, instead of exercising that influence on Celine which in the earliest period of their married life was in his power, and of using it to elevate and quicken what was really noble and good in her, was a mistake ; not, indeed, his first, but one that cost him the happiness of his whole married life. If Celine had been of a gentle and retiring nature, this continual attention to all her doings would have confused her and made her more awkward by destroying her self-confidence, but for a disposition so sensitive as Celine's, these petty fault-findings were intolerable. Accustomed with her father to have perfect liberty of action, and spoiled by the admiration which he felt for his gifted daughter, Otto's remarks and criticisms were almost hateful to her.

She felt that Otto was in the wrong ; that in a certain sense she was far above the women whom he placed before her as examples ; that she far excelled them in talents and knowledge ; and it grieved and provoked her that he should so dread the judgment of these country-town inhabitants of Dilburg, that even his admiration for her yielded to his fear that the departure from the customary rules of society would excite their disapproval.

At first Celine endured Otto's mode of treatment, though with a murmuring and rebellious spirit, until on a certain day he

went too far, and the bow, too rudely bent, broke in the middle.

Then a violent scene took place, which at once made him understand, but too late, that his method of proceeding was wrong.

Celine declared that she would never set foot in Dilburg again, and would thus relieve Otto from all further grounds of annoyance on her account. And she kept her word with a consistent perseverance, or, to call it by its proper name, obstinacy, which neither persuasion nor entreaty could shake, although more than a year and a half had elapsed since she made the determination.

And even when Burgomaster Welters died, and her proper place would have been at Otto's side at his grave, she still kept to her resolution.

From that moment it seemed as if Celine had released herself from every tie which attached her to Otto, as if all good intentions were set aside, and all sense of duty forgotten.

The smallest reason was enough to make her burst out into an unbridled passion ; every wish of Otto's was systematically thwarted ; she wandered through the Beckley woods accompanied only by Cæsar ; and the room in which Otto was to be found was so carefully avoided that sometimes days elapsed without his seeing her. Things were in this condition when the anniversary of Mr. Arnold's death arrived, and then Otto followed his wife to the churchyard, whither he supposed she had ridden, and took advantage of her softened state of mind to make a new attempt at reconciliation. He succeeded, as far as success was possible.

For a dispute and alienation lasting for months leaves indelible traces behind, like a rent in a piece of linen, which the most skilful hand cannot mend so that all traces of the tear should disappear. It can never be again as it was before, and the value is gone. So it was with Otto and Celine.

During these months of alienation both had thought and suffered much more than they dared to own to one another ; both had accustomed themselves so much to going their own way without consulting or communicating with each other that the renewal of intercourse was almost oppressive ; and, what was worse, the estrangement had diminished their mutual affection.

Now and then, when Celine was in higher spirits than usual, and talked to him in her old way, or sat down to the piano, Otto's heart would again glow with the admiration which had formerly enslaved him ; but the fire of his passion was extinguished, and there only survived a sad tenderness towards the wife whom he had once loved so much, and whom he could not make happy, while a consciousness of his own lost happiness, seemed to cast a dark shadow over his whole life.

After their reconciliation, Celine returned to the old life which she had led before her father's death.

When the Javanese servants had returned to their own country, because there was no longer any prospect of their going back with Celine, and it appeared an utter impossibility for her to manage her household with Dutch servants, by her wish a housekeeper was engaged, to whom the entire management of the household was given up ; Celine's time was now quite filled up, as formerly, with reading, walking, riding, hunting, fishing, and the care of her flowers, and Otto could take part in these pursuits as much or as little as it suited him, but not one word from her showed him that his company was more agreeable to her than solitude.

Fortunately Otto found much distraction in his now constantly increasing practice, but yet he felt deeply the loneliness and desolation of his life. When Celine left off paying visits, and did not admit any one from Dilburg except the family, Beckley soon became as lonely as in the time of

Mr. Arnold, whilst Otto felt it to be impossible for him to appear in Dilburg society without his wife. Now and then, however, when he came in at tea-time and found the sitting-room deserted (for his wife hardly ever appeared there unless for the moment she had nothing more to her taste to do), he would leave his dull, sad home, and go to his father's house in Dilburg, to take part in the cheerful sociability which prevailed there, and which was almost a necessity of life to him.

But in those days no one ever knew what was passing in Otto's mind. To no one had he ever spoken of the bitter disappointment of his married life, not even to Emmy, with whom he was on more confidential terms than with any one else.

Whether a faint hope still lingered in his heart that all would yet be changed; whether this was the cause of his inexhaustible patience towards Celine, whose freaks and humors increased in proportion as he became gentler and more indulgent; or that he had resolved that in the dwelling where happiness and love were wanting, peace at least should reign, certain it is that Otto was more exact in the fulfilment of his duties towards his wife in proportion as he found his affection diminish, and at the time of which I now write, two years after their marriage, a calm repose had come into their relations with each other which, compared with that which mutual love and confidence can give, might be likened to the calm repose of death. . . .

"And when am I to see your little wife, Otto?" asked the unsuspecting Siword Hiddema, as they took leave one evening. "To-morrow I am going to Sollingen, and unless any other time would suit you better, I'll come and drink tea with you at Beckley the day after."

. And as Otto had to be in Dilburg on the afternoon in question, it was settled between him and his friend that he should

himself come to take Siword to his house at Beckley.

To say the truth, this coming to tea was altogether disagreeable to Otto, as indeed had been the visit of every stranger of whose good reception by Celine he could never be quite certain.

If it happened that she was in a good humor, then indeed she could be the most agreeable hostess, but inasmuch as the smallest trifle was sometimes enough to destroy her temper for the whole day, he could naturally place no reliance on it, and the visit of Siword Hiddema, which had already led to a somewhat disagreeable discussion between the married pair, promised little pleasure to Otto.

"Celine," Otto had said to his wife that morning, "if I have ever wished any one to be well received here, it is my guest of this evening."

"That means that he must take home with him the best possible impression of Mrs. Welters."

Unimportant as these words of Celine were in themselves, they acquired an ironical sound by the manner in which they were uttered, and the scornful smile which played on her lips.

"I conceive, Celine," said Otto, seriously, "that whenever a husband knows that his wife can put on two entirely different kinds of manner, he may be permitted to wish to present her to his friends in the best light."

"Certainly," answered Celine, in a bitter tone, "for what is the value of a wife if her value is not recognized by every one? What does it signify if she is all-beautiful, lovely, and charming in the eyes of her husband, if he does not see that opinion ratified in the eyes of his friends? . . . So Mr. Hiddema is to be well received! To make sure of it, had you not better make me out a list of what I ought to do, and what I ought to abstain from—what I may say and what I may not?"

Vexed, but without speaking, Otto left the room.

The bitterness expressed in every word which Celine spoke, when she was in an ill-humor, was almost intolerable to him, and forced upon him the conviction of how deep-seated must be the rancor of his wife towards him, to escape from her lips as it did at every unguarded moment. Knowing by experience that every word he might now utter would only serve to excite Celine's anger all the more and still further to damage the matter in hand, Otto took his departure, simply saying, as he left, that he intended to dine in Dilburg with his family, and to return home at about seven o'clock, bringing his friend Hiddema with him.

Later the two gentlemen walked together through the Dilburg gate, in close conversation about the Sollingen estate, which had been inspected by Siword Hiddema the day before, and seemed to have answered all his expectations.

"I am prepared to offer a good round sum for it, Otto," he said, "as I understand that two purchasers have already come forward; for whatever may be the actual value of Sollingen, to me it is worth something more."

"But I have always heard," remarked Otto, "that as regards producing annual income, Sollingen has not much value."

"And you would not be surprised at this if you knew the neglected state of the property. No, Otto; believe me, more than five hundred acres of land—wood, meadow, and arable land—must with intelligent management produce a rent. A capable steward and the careful eye of the owner will do wonders; and, at the worst, I have sufficient means to allow myself the luxury of residing at Sollingen."

"And the house?"

"The house is in a better state than could have been expected; with regard to the grounds, there is little or nothing to be

altered, and all that concerns painters and paperhangars is too quickly done to make any difficulty about it."

Here a turn in the road, which brought them in sight of the approach to Beckley, broke off their conversation about Sollingen.

"Is that Beckley, Otto? Now that I see it I remember it in former times, but I had no idea it was so prettily situated. Well, Otto, who would have thought formerly that this pretty country place would once be your home, and that you would keep house here with a dear little wife?"

Otto smiled rather faintly in answer. He hardly heard what Siword said, for he was full of anxious thought as to the possible continuance of Celine's ill-humor, and the consequent bad reception which might await him at Beckley.

Nevertheless, he breathed more freely when he saw from the bridge over the brook that the glass doors leading on the terrace from the drawing-room were open, and the silver tea-service, which was ready on the table, even at that distance shone in their eyes.

This was a sign that Celine expected them, and by not receiving them in the ordinary sitting-room intended to do honor to the guest.

Easier in his mind than he had been the whole day, he led Siword through the open glass doors into the house, found a comfortable seat for him in an arm-chair, and after sitting with him for a few moments, said that he would go up-stairs and tell his wife that they were come.

Celine, however, was nowhere to be found, and all the account that the house-keeper could give of her was, that she had ordered tea to be got ready in the drawing-room, that she had gone out after dinner and had not yet returned.

How Otto felt when he had to go back to his guest with the intelligence that his

wife was not at home, I can scarcely describe.

Bitterness and shame struggled with him, and doing his best to state the matter to Siword as an unimportant trifle, he belied his words by the despairing, downcast expression of his face.

"It is very annoying, Siword," he said, in the lightest manner possible; "but my wife appears to have mistaken the time; she often takes long walks, and you know how it is with ladies as to reckoning time."

"Well, I don't think we are in any hurry, Otto. I will move my chair on to the terrace and light a cigar, in expectation of the cup of tea which your little wife will presently make for us."

And Siword looked up at Otto as innocently as if there were nothing strange in the absence of the hostess, and he suited his action to his words by placing his chair on the terrace and taking advantage of the first thing that came into his head in order to turn the conversation.

"What a charming scent this jessamine gives, Otto; it is almost a pity to smoke one's cigar here."

Otto hardly answered; he sat on thorns, and his distress increased every moment. What must Siword think of Celine? How could he himself excuse her behavior, after the special recommendation he had left with her as to receiving his guest.

Siword chatted without embarrassment almost too obviously about all sorts of things, as if he had come to Beckley only for that purpose, and he declared too conscientiously that he wanted nothing more than a cigar and a sociable talk with an old friend—it was an additional aggravation to Otto to hear the boiling water which, steaming and singing, suggested drinking tea, and he felt that Siword was only trying to set him at his ease, and he wondered what he (Otto) should have thought had he met with a similar reception. Half an hour elapsed, and still

Celine did not appear. Otto got up from his chair, and said with a painful expression on his lips, which he tried to turn into a smile—

"The housekeeper shall make tea for us, Siword, for I cannot imagine what has become of my wife."

"Let the housekeeper alone, Otto. If you don't like to wait any longer, I will do the honors of your tea-table. You know Heaven helps those that help themselves. . . . Here I shall sit, and you shall see presently what a famous brew Siword Hiddema will give you."

Placing himself at the tea-table, and appearing not to notice Otto's silence and gloominess, Siword jokingly began to make tea, and was just occupied in pouring out the first cup, when a clear, ringing laugh made him look up, and, with the teapot in his hands, he turned his eyes towards a female form who stood on the terrace by the open glass door, apparently watching his somewhat absurd attempts at tea-making.

Her dress disordered and muddy, her face scratched by a thorn-bush, bleeding and heated, her hair rough and partly hanging loose, a double-barrelled gun in her hand, and preventing with her foot a large dog as muddy as herself from coming into the room—so stood Otto's wife before Siword Hiddema.

"Otto, I have got him!" were the first words which she called out to her husband in an excited, triumphant tone. But it seemed as if the first glance at the sombre expression of his face recalled her to her senses. Saluting her guest with inimitable courtesy, she said to him, "Mr. Hiddema, I see that I am late, but when I tell you that I have been after a fox, which for months has been stealing my hens and pigeons, and have shot him, you will surely forgive me. You shall presently come and see him—Friend Reynard, with his beautiful tail—but I must first go and change my

dress ; for we are in such a state that we are not fit to come into a smart drawing-room, are we, Cæsar ? ”

She laughed again, and, carefully keeping outside the door, she put out her hand to her guest, who had got up and had moved towards the door, but was at first too much taken aback by her strange appearance to say anything.

“ After we had waited for you, we began to trespass upon your rights,” said Siword, pointing to the tea-table, “ and so we can’t complain.”

“ You have managed it so well,” answered Celine, laughing, “ that if I dared to do so before Otto, I would say : Give me a cup of tea, for pity’s sake, for I am dying of thirst.”

“ Well, why not ? ” rejoined Siword, while, joining in Celine’s laugh, he went back to the tea-table ; “ does your ladyship drink sugar and milk ? ”

“ As much sugar as you please.”

And, sitting down on the chair which Siword had placed on the terrace, she enjoyed the cup of tea which he brought her, and chatted with her guest, evidently in the merriest humor, without paying the least attention to Otto, who in silence and in the highest degree put out, walked up and down the room.

Half an hour later, Celine sat carefully dressed with the two gentlemen on the terrace. She conversed in her most cheerful and easy manner, and whatever Siword may have thought of her at first, he could not now resist the influence of her singular originality, nor a feeling of admiration for her strange, unusual beauty.

Full of animation as she always was when anything excited her interest, she took her guest to the stables, where she showed him in triumph the fox which she had shot, and Schimmel, who was properly introduced to the new acquaintance ; afterwards Celine, wholly under the influence of her own good humor, sat down to

the pianoforte of her own accord, whilst the two gentlemen, sitting outside before the open glass doors, were enjoying the cool freshness of the summer evening with a glass of wine.

I have already spoken of her great musical talent, and now her masterly hand evoked from the instrument the most thrilling and pathetic strains, alternately joyous, melancholy, wild, and passionate, according to the mighty will of her varying inspiration, and which carried away her hearers to a complete oblivion of all around them. Very rarely now did Celine thus lose herself in improvised playing, and it revived recollections in Otto’s heart and changed the sullen mood, into which her behavior that day had thrown him, to one of melancholy tenderness, and made him repentant for all the bitterness which he had entertained this evening towards his beautiful, gifted wife.

In the darkness which had come on, Celine’s playing filled his ears with the most enchanting tones, stirring up feelings within him which had so long been dormant, that he had gradually learnt to regard them as dead. All these things combined involuntarily carried Otto’s thoughts back to that first evening when Celine had played to him, and to the love with which he was then inspired. Listening to the strong yearnings of his heart towards peace and reconciliation, he slipped away unobserved from the side of his guest into the room, which had become almost quite dark, and silently approaching the piano, he threw his arms round his wife’s neck and gave her, unawares, a kiss.

At that moment Siword, who, under the influence of the music, had sunk into a dreamy state, was roused to consciousness by a shrill discord proceeding from the instrument itself, and Celine’s playing came unexpectedly to an end.

Through the darkness which prevailed in the room he could not distinguish any-

thing, but a still greater discord than that of the instrument grated upon his ear in the voice of Otto's wife and the tone in which she said—

"Let us have lights, Otto; I hate this darkness."

As Otto rang the bell, Siword came into the room to thank Celine for the pleasure she had afforded him, but he received no answer. Meanwhile the maid came in with the lamp lighted.

"What is the meaning of this, that Charles does not bring in the lamp?" Otto asked her, as he shut the glass door next him.

The maid gave a hesitating look at Celine before she answered timidly—

"Charles is not here, sir."

"Charles is not here?" asked Otto in a surprised tone; "what does that mean?"

"Nothing, Otto," interposed Celine calmly, while she made a sign to the maid to leave the room; "Charles is not here, for I dismissed him this afternoon."

"Heavens, Celine!" cried Otto, highly indignant; "how could you do this? Charles is the best servant one could possibly find. How dare you do this without my knowledge?"

"I turn off every servant," said Celine, coolly, "who is disobedient to me. I consider myself entitled to do so without asking advice of any one."

"But, in Heaven's name, what can he have done?"

"It seems to me, Otto, that this subject cannot be specially interesting to our guest, and we had better put off all further explanation till a more convenient time. It is enough that Charles is gone, and shall never set foot in my house again."

"I believe that it is our house of which you are speaking," said Otto, in a bitter tone.

"Just as you please," she answered, shrugging her shoulders, and turning her back to him as she went out upon the ter-

race, and vanished in the darkness; exactly as she had done on that very evening which Otto had, a few moments before, recalled to himself with such tender feelings. And, just as then, Celine did not come back, and the gentlemen supped together, whilst the third place at the table remained unoccupied, and Siword had not courage to allude to her absence, although he made superhuman exertions to keep up a conversation with Otto on indifferent subjects. But it was difficult to determine which of the two felt most relieved when the evening was so far over that Siword could speak of going home. As he took leave of his host, who had accompanied him to the gate of Beckley, he placed his hand on Otto's shoulder, and said, seriously—

"Otto, in every marriage, even in the best, there are days of light and shadow. I have been married myself, and I know this by experience. That I should have come to you on a dark day naturally annoys me, but you would do wrong to pay attention to it. Who knows how beautifully the sun may shine when I come again?"

"The sun shines no more after it has set," answered Otto, in a bitter, melancholy tone.

"Not till the night is over, but even the longest night has an end; and you know, Otto, that the night is darkest just before the dawn. Keep up your spirits, my good fellow."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE LAST QUARREL.

AGAIN another week has passed. The month of May is not yet at an end, and the tints of spring are still on the face of nature, which, retarded by the unusual severity of April, is making up for lost time with redoubled speed, and bringing into activity the old but ever new miracle of the revival of vegetation. The sun, not as yet

carefully shut out, as in the scorching heat of midsummer, but appreciated and admitted freely into all houses, sheds light and cheerfulness, awakening in most hearts an echo which is in harmony with the young life out of doors.

In most hearts, but not in all.

Otto Welters' heart was one of these exceptions.

Even in his office, and on the desk at which he was seated, the cheery sunbeams danced up and down, but he himself sat gloomy and sunk in thought, without commencing many matters of business that awaited his attention.

A strange restlessness had come over Otto that morning, a restlessness which made him wake much earlier than usual, and drove him out for an early walk ; it even followed him into his office, where generally he was able to put aside all cares and thoughts that might hinder him from giving himself undisturbedly to his work.

Here it was not his wont to dwell on the circumstances of his private life ; here he was the advocate, and the man, with his needs and wishes, was thrown into the background by the force of his will and the absorbing exertions which his work required. But to-day the man appeared to have the upper hand, and to work was almost impossible.

To-day everything was a hindrance and a trouble—the sunbeams which played on the white paper, the twittering birds in the lime trees before the house, the humming bee and the buzzing fly, as they came in at the window with the warm summer air, and the chatter of the children at play in the market-place, but above all the painful thoughts which filled his heart till it well-nigh burst.

It was almost as if this sunny, cheery May morning had brought him to the consciousness of the sharp contest going on within him, as if all the self-deception which had so long possessed him had de-

parted, as if all at once he comprehended that the green oasis which he had fancied he had seen in the distance were but a mirage, which had made him overlook the dry, bare desert of his life. He shuddered when he thought of the future—the future which could bring him nothing but the confirmation or increase of the wretchedness of to-day.

And when he looked back, his heart was wrung with self-reproach and remorse, for then he thought of her who in every sorrowful hour of his life came before his mind—of Mary van Stein, the noble, pure being whom he had thrust away, and with her a happiness which might have been perfect but for the weakness and inconstancy which had led his heart far from her.

He reproached himself for having ever married Celine, knowing, as he did well enough, that he was not the man to bear with or improve such a nature as hers.

He reproached himself in that he had exercised no influence on her for good ; that in some things he was too weak and yielding, and in others too impatient, and that at all times he acted in opposition to her views. He reproached himself for having betrayed the confidence which Mr. Arnold had placed in him, and for having destroyed the happiness of Celine's life by a marriage which had only served to extinguish in her every noble aim.

Yes, indeed, in this hour, what was there which was not a matter of reproach to Otto Welters ?

In this hour, it was as if he had drained the bitter cup of life to its last dregs—as if he had closed for ever his account as regards all hope of peace and happiness.

And yet in such a bitter hour as this there still smoulders in every man's heart a spark of reaction, which not unfrequently at that very moment rekindles into a new life of hope and courage, however contradictory this may seem. As by a thousand invisible springs, man is attached to

earth and life—a life which often seems of so little worth in the eyes of others—so also the heart clings to happiness, and cannot, and will not, renounce it : and never less than when that happiness seems to be sinking away for ever. Springing up from his chair, he paced up and down the room in great trouble and excitement, and gave utterance in a faint voice to the words which rang in his heart : “ Is it too late, irreversibly too late ? ”

No, not too late, with God’s help ! In this very hour, which witnessed the deep feelings which agitated him, he vowed that he would let Celine see once for all the suffering and misery with which his heart was lacerated.

She might misunderstand or ridicule him, but he would make a last effort to break through the ice-crust which shut up both their hearts ; he would make one more effort to wipe out the past ; once more he would begin his married life afresh, and it should, it *must*, be different from what it had been.

It was not yet eleven o’clock when Otto left his office, a circumstance for which there was no precedent in all the years during which he had been settled as an advocate at Dilburg.

He felt bound to take advantage of his present state of mind. An undefined plan came into his head, that he would tempt Celine to take a walk with him this fine morning, that he would lead her to the spot where he had first told her of his love, and would there impart to her anew all that he had hoped and wished.

With hasty steps he walked out of the town gate—at an hour which otherwise always found him at his office ; it was the very same hour, however, when he first went to Beckley, and now, in the full glow of the morning sun, the house looked just as it did then.

On approaching the house, no sign of

life was perceptible. Only the groom, who was leading Celine’s horse slowly up and down before the door, in evident expectation of its mistress, satisfied Otto that he should find his wife still in-doors.

In the new arrangement of the rooms after Otto and Celine’s marriage, and in the early days of their affection and mutual confidence, a little room next to Otto’s study was fitted up as Celine’s boudoir.

These were connected by a door, and Celine’s room had no other exit, and, as well as Otto’s room, was in the front of the house.

Except when dinner or any other meal required the presence of the mistress of the house, Celine seldom or never came into the rooms down-stairs, and if she were not out of doors or in the orangery, Otto was sure to find his wife in this little sanctum, where her books and writing-table provided her with the only occupations which engaged her when in-doors.

Hither, therefore, returning at this unusual hour, Otto directed his steps. But immediately on entering his own room he perceived that Celine’s door was shut, which was never the case. To his question, “ Are you there, Celine ? ” he obtained no reply, and his knock at the door was not answered. He then opened the door to satisfy himself of her absence. The next instant, with a cry of astonishment, he started back, at the same time throwing the door wide open.

And no wonder.

Sunk in Celine’s arm-chair in a comfortable attitude, with one leg thrown over the other, a cigar in one hand and a riding-whip in the other, sat a young man ; his cap, of the same stuff as the rest of his clothes, was drawn over his eyes. He did not move, he did not look up, when Otto indignantly and in a harsh tone called out to him—

“ Who are you ? what are you doing here ? ”

The stranger continued motionless, and Otto, hardly master of himself, snatched the cap from his head so as to see his features.

A loud laugh resounded through the room, and Otto's astonished angry eyes beheld the face of his wife.

"Good Heavens, Celine! what does this new prank of yours mean?"

Celine remained calmly leaning back after the first outburst of her merriment, gave a few whiffs of her cigar, blew the smoke in little clouds towards Otto, and then said, coolly—

"Well, Otto, one wishes sometimes to do something out of the common way, and I am so tired of my long riding-habit that I thought I should like to try and ride without that incumbrance."

"You don't mean to say that you intend to ride out like this, and be the laughing-stock of your servants and of all who happen to see you?"

"Yes, I was about to do so," answered Celine, with provoking coolness.

"How did you procure that unbefitting dress? who provided it for you?" asked Otto, becoming warmer, and entirely forgetting, alas! with what feelings and good intentions he had entered the house.

"I got it myself and paid for it myself. At your service, my lord and husband."

"In Dilburg?"

"No; in Arnheim."

"Then you have been to Arnheim without my knowledge?"

"Yes; yesterday when you came home I had just returned."

"So you have also deceived me, Celine," said Otto, bitterly.

Now Celine sprang up.

All her assumed or real coolness at once left her, her eyes began to sparkle, whilst in a loud voice, indicating her rising passion, she cried out—

"*Deceive!* Who dares to say that I deceive or ever have deceived any one? Do

you know who it is that people deceive? Those whom they fear when they are cowards; but I am not a coward, and I fear no one in the world, and yourself least of all."

"You hardly need say that, Celine," added Otto, in the same bitter tone. "If you felt the smallest regard, the least respect for me, you would not act as you do."

"What is it that I do? What is it that I wish? Nothing but to amuse myself in my own way. What harm is there in my amusing myself by riding in this dress? What harm could you find in it, were it not for the old silly fear of public opinion, which with you is above everything else? Have I so much pleasure in my life, Otto, that you should embitter the little that I can enjoy?"

"It is not my fault, Celine, that you have so little enjoyment. You have voluntarily withdrawn yourself from everything which made your life like that of other women, and which would have enabled you to take part in their amusements and pleasures."

"How *dare* you speak of that?" exclaimed Celine, in a tone of violent passion. "Who is it that has driven me out of society by cavilling and fault finding? Who is it that has deprived me of the wish to shape my course according to the accepted, tedious, trifling customs of the world, which is your idol? Where is the love and patience with the hope of which you tempted me into marriage? What has become of my happiness which you have taken into your own hands? Do you know what has become of it? That every morning I wake with the wish to be at rest in my father's grave; that every evening I pray that I may not wake again; that hell itself does not appear to me so fearful as my present life; that I hate you for the happiness of my life which you have stolen from me; that I despise you

for the weakness and little-mindedness which are the principal traits of your character."

At these last words Otto became deadly pale. The passionate rapidity with which they were screamed rather than spoken by Celine, her voice rising higher and higher, the angry glances which came like lightning from her eyes, struck Otto as if a knife were thrust into his heart.

At the last reproach of weakness and little-mindedness he raised his head, and his face expressed wrath and scorn.

"Weak I was, Celine," he exclaimed, "very weak indeed, but that is past, now, I hope. But even my weakness might be excused when a fury and not a woman stands before me. Let us finish this unworthy wrangle. I swear now that you shall not ride out in this unseemly dress, or that I will prevent its repetition by sending a bullet through Schimmel's head when you come home."

"You dare—you dare to lay a finger on Schimmel, and you shall see what will happen to you! Let me pass." . . .

Otto, with an involuntary movement, had stepped back a little when Celine, after the first hasty words, came closer and closer to him. She now stood in the doorway between the two rooms, and with her last words she raised her whip.

At this threat every sensation in Otto was overcome by the feeling of insult to his dignity as a man, and his anger boiled up in him at the humiliation intended by Celine. Before the stroke descended the whip was snatched by Otto out of Celine's hand, and before she comprehended his intention, she was thrust back by his strong arm into her own room.

"She who behaves like a naughty child must be treated like a naughty child," said Otto. Here you must remain till you have changed this foolish dress for one befitting your sex, and have given it up to me. As my wife cannot take proper care of her own

good name, I must do so; and with all the weakness with which you reproach me, Celine, you shall find yourself mistaken in thinking that I shall be subservient to you in matters which I believe to be unbecoming in my wife."

Celine sank down into the chair where she had been sitting when Otto first entered.

She looked intensely pale, but made no effort to oppose him; but her large dark eyes, which still glowed with passion, followed all his movements whilst he took the key, which was in the inside of the door, out of the lock, and left the room.

He had hardly shut the door and turned the key, when he heard Celine's laugh—not her usual silvery laugh, so pleasant to the ear, but a loud, unnatural sound, as no laugh ever sounded that came from the heart.

Otto put the key in his pocket, and stood still for a moment, pressing his hand on his beating heart, whilst the cold sweat stood in drops on his forehead.

So pale, so cast down, he stood motionless by the door he had shut, overwhelmed by the scene which had taken place between his wife and himself, grieved from the bottom of his soul at the words she had applied to him, and outraged in the highest degree by the degrading treatment to which, but for his unexpected resistance, he would have been subjected.

Bewildered by the different sensations which agitated him, he staggered to a chair, and, with his head bent over a table, there came from his breast sighs and sobs which bore witness to the intolerable martyrdom of his soul. And what mingled thoughts crossed his mind when he had so far recovered himself as to be able to think! How dear Celine had been to him; how sacred the promise he had made to make her happy; and with what good intentions he had even in that very hour entered his home.

And what was the end of it all?—that she had told him plainly that she hated

and despised him, and thought death preferable to life as his wife.

Celine had reproached him with narrow-mindedness. Was he narrow-minded in not letting her ride out in man's attire? It was a proceeding which no man should permit his wife to take, if he set any value on her good name.

And she had called him weak. It might well be that he was weak towards Celine, and that he had thus lost her respect and affection; but this reproach should from this day be no longer applicable to him.

From this very hour he would be her husband and master, and not the slave of her humors and fancies; and her stubbornness itself should bend to the strength of his will. He felt all too strongly that Celine's hard, insulting words had snapped the last tie which attached him to her; that he now would act as he never could before, so long as the hope of better days and of winning her affection had induced him to spare her and treat her with indulgence. In his excitement he saw with pleasure the day approaching which should bring to Celine the conviction that she had found her master in him. Sooner or later he would extinguish her insolence; he would break her pride; he would transform her unbribled wilfulness into obedience, even if it were to be a contest of life or death.

But all at once Otto was disturbed in his meditations. He heard the tramp of a horse under his window, and a loud, well-known laugh reached his ear from below.

In wild haste he rushed to the window and opened it . . . and yes! there sat Celine on horseback in her male attire, the horse rearing as she pressed her spurs into its sides, when Otto stretched out of the window and looked down.

With a mocking expression in her face, which was glowing with excitement, she looked up, took off her cap to him, and at the same moment, giving her spirited horse a sharp stroke with the whip, she

dashed off at full gallop across the lawn, and down the slope from the terrace to the brook.

Otto held his breath with anxiety when he saw the animal take an almost impossible leap over the broad brook; an instant later he saw Celine, unharmed, flying across the meadow which stretched beyond; and then he turned away his gaze from her.

Almost involuntarily he unlocked the door of her room, where the open window showed clearly how she had escaped. When Otto saw the dangerous jump she must have taken to reach the roof of the stable, how from thence she must have crept along the gutter, and got in at the window of the hay-loft, and so down to the ground, he shuddered; but every other sensation gave place to that of deep scorn when he saw on a table by the window a paper, on which, in Celine's handwriting, were the following absurd lines :

“ Otto, would you keep me sure,
Build a house with bars secure ;
Without them 'tis no prison—lo,
The window opening out I go !
Then learn, good sir, I'll have my way ;
You cannot force me to obey.”

In fierce anger Otto crumpled the paper in his clenched hand, and then sank into a chair, overcome by the bitterest thoughts.

He would conquer this woman; his wife should yield to his will! No; the idea of his powerlessness came over him with overwhelming force, and filled him with a sensation of dull, hopeless, helplessness, which made all further thought impossible.

He sat there motionless, his eyes fixed as if gazing into a cloud which embraced the past, the present, and the future, almost without feeling or consciousness, like a person in a dream, without notion of time, place, or personality.

How long he there remained he could not afterwards recollect. The first impression he received was a strange confusion of

voices on the terrace below, an unusual running up-stairs and through the rooms, and at last the calling out of his name brought him to his senses, and he sprang up. His housekeeper stood before him. A glance at her pale face told him sufficient to produce in him a cold shudder from head to foot.

"Has anything happened to my wife?" he stammered out with a voice almost soundless, and hollow, bewildered eyes.

The housekeeper nodded assent, being almost without the power of speaking. When Otto wished to pass by her, she held him back.

"They are bringing her in," she whispered; "a bed has been prepared in the room below. For Heaven's sake be calm."

A few moments later, Otto went with tottering steps to meet the laborers who were carrying his wife towards the house carefully on a mattress. They had taken her up for dead below on the dyke, which in her wild flight she had tried to ride up by a rough path. At the last steep part of it the horse had slipped down, and, falling with its rider over and over, had at last come down with its whole weight upon her body.

She rested in Otto's arms as motionless and cold as a corpse, when he took her from the mattress, carried her into the house, and placed her upon the bed already prepared for her.

A great confusion followed. Servants ran here and there; inquisitive persons came up to the house; messengers were sent in all directions to obtain medical assistance; and meanwhile the despairing husband knelt by the apparently lifeless body of his wife, covered her cold hands with kisses, whilst hot, bitter tears sprang from his eyes—forgetting all that had passed, and insensible to everything but the torturing consciousness that the wife whom he once so passionately loved had parted from him in dispute and anger, and

would probably die without one word of forgiveness and reconciliation.

In the despair of his heart he called her by name with the tenderest caresses; but these, no more than the restoratives applied by the housekeeper, could wake Celine from her stupor.

There she lay, motionless, as if dead, a painful expression on her marble-white face, which seemed yet paler in contrast with the dishevelled black locks which lay spread over the pillow—beautiful as a picture even in this moment of unconsciousness bordering on death, and scarcely showing by her faint, almost imperceptible breathing that she still belonged to the living.

A painful half-hour passed without bringing any change. The messenger came back from Dilburg breathless, followed immediately by the doctor's carriage, which the longing eyes of the housekeeper had seen coming along the approach. At the same moment that she left the room to meet the doctor and to give the necessary directions, the door was burst open violently, and the dog Cæsar, who had got loose from the stable, sprang yelping into the room. With a second spring the faithful animal was by the bed of its mistress; before Otto could hinder him he had placed his sore feet on the pillow, and licked her pale face with a mournful howl. She opened her eyes for an instant, and whilst they rested on her beloved dog, a faint smile played on her lips. She tried to lift up her hand to stroke him, but a painful cry escaped her even at the slight movement.

Again she closed her eyes, and again unconsciousness seemed to hold fast her senses, when Otto's voice—his despairing prayer for one word, one look of forgiveness before she left him—seemed once more to call her back to life.

Whilst already the pallor of her cheek was changing into the hue of death, she

once more raised her great dark eyes on her husband with an indescribable look, so soft, so loving and imploring, a look that spoke more than all words could have said —forgiving and asking for forgiveness.

Otto's emotion was too great to admit of his uttering a word. He bent low over Celine, and the kiss which he gave her lips, which were already stiffening, was answered; they might perhaps be said to be the first kisses of mutual, true, and real love.

The first and the last.

At that instant the report of a gun fired in the immediate vicinity of the house came through the room.

As if aroused by an electric shock, the dying wife sat up straight, and whilst her eyes opened wide, her lips whispered the hardly intelligible words, "Poor Schimmel!" and she sank back a corpse.

What Celine had in her last moment instinctively comprehended was true; the shot that she heard released from suffering her favorite horse, which had been brought home with one of its fore-legs broken.

CHAPTER XIX.

SORROW AND CONSOLATION.

I MUST return to Emmy, going back to her from the week which witnessed the events at Beckley just related. We left her on the morning after the day on which she received the terrible shock of learning Bruno's inconstancy.

Who does not know the sensation with which one awakes during a deep sorrow, the faint consciousness of something terrible which presses upon the heart, and which, on first opening the eyes, slowly acquires form and shape, and stands before the bed like a frowning spectre in the clear daylight?

Who does not know the hopeless feeling that makes one press one's head deeper into the pillow with a sense of shrinking

dread at the return of daylight; a longing to sink back again into the sweet forgetfulness of sleep—sleep, which had fled at the first sign of pain? The hours go by; the business of the day demands our attention; the sun shines as clearly, the birds sing as merrily, the sky is as blue and unclouded, and the world follows its course whether we have joyful or bleeding hearts; on and on without sympathy or pity for us! . . .

Such an awaking had Emmy Welters on the morning of which I write. The excitement of the previous evening and of the night had subsided, and with it the impression of the words which seemed as if they had been spoken in a dream, and a blank dejection was almost the only feeling of which she was conscious.

She felt, however, more than on the previous evening, the grievous reality of her trouble, and still more the bitterness which was the principal feature of her sorrow.

In proportion as her confidence in Bruno had been unbounded, was the severity of the shock which his unfaithfulness caused her. It was not a sorrow which could find relief in tears or complaints, but a sorrow which, with its sharp tooth, gnawed at her heart, and made it hard and incapable of any softer emotion. Till to-day the thought had never come into Emmy's heart that she had sacrificed anything for Bruno, that there was any merit in her love and faith, or in her power of endurance in spite of opposition and separation.

Had not the sense of reciprocal love supported her, and rendered it impossible for her to give way?

But now that the love on Bruno's side had fallen away, the long account which made Bruno her debtor stood forth in burning characters before her mind, the account in which ingratitude was added to the score of inconstancy.

And when she thought how short a time

it had taken Bruno to forget her ; how, knowing with what a longing she would look for his letters, he had not even made her acquainted with the truth : when she thought that his love and tenderness, which she had made the greatest treasure of her heart, were now dedicated to another woman—when Emmy meditated on all this, and could not drive away these thoughts for a single hour—nay, for a single moment, then no tears flowed from her burning eyes, no sighs of sorrow escaped from her breast, and she sat down in a state of utter despondency which seemed to banish all hope of happiness in the future.

Sometimes she hated herself for not being able to control her thoughts, or to prevent herself from placing Bruno before her eyes with the honorable, open-hearted look which lived in her recollection ; sometimes she felt herself to be wicked and unwomanly, when, at the simple thought of Christian forgiveness, a rebellious spirit broke forth in her which overpowered all gentler emotions, and made her lips refuse to express a wish for the happiness of him who had rendered her so miserable.

And who will condemn my poor heroine ?

I know that there are individuals whose goodness is so unbounded, that even upon a discovery like that of Emmy's they would at once speak the word of forgiveness, not only with the lips, but with the heart ; but I know likewise that one must be almost an angel, or a being entirely without character, to be able to do this without a violent struggle.

Emmy was, however, neither the one nor the other.

Emmy would have looked upon it as a boon had any household duties been assigned to her, which would have forced her to work and exert herself, and thus have afforded her some distraction. The time, which she knew not how to employ,

hung heavy as lead upon her. To read was as impossible as to fix her mind on any studies ; and needlework, that reviving cordial for sorrowful meditation, was a torment to her, as it involved sitting still, and that, in her present restless frame of mind, was equally impossible. Thus, in these first sad days, the presence of little Seyna was quite a relief to her.

She passed the whole day either in her own room or in the garden with the child, whose merry chatter, whilst she occupied herself with teaching Seyna a little, under pretext of play, diverted Emmy's thoughts, and sustained her as nothing else could have done at this time. And what was begun out of simple inclination was continued out of warm affection, which was stimulated by the attachment of the child to herself.

"Cousin Emmy" was always on Seyna's lips. She followed Emmy about the house like a little dog, and though her wilful little self would not mind what any one else said to her, she gave way at a single word from Emmy, just as at a look from her father.

The father, Siword Hiddema, was often the subject of Emmy's thoughts in connection with his little daughter. How cold, how strict, how hard he was sometimes towards Seyna ; but nevertheless Emmy was quite aware that the child was the object of his idolatrous love. Had she not seen him turn pale when the child had any little accidental fall, and yet scolding her when, on taking her up, he found her unhurt, instead of kissing and petting her, which would have been Emmy's own natural impulse ?

And how dear, how very dear, was the father to the child ! How she colored with joy at an approving word from his lips. What greater pleasure could she have than to stand by his knee, with her hand upon his arm, or to be taken by him for a walk or a visit ? Evidently spoiled, and not

accustomed to obey others, the very appearance of opposition vanished in Seyna at the sound of his voice ; but to pour out her little heart to him, to fall upon his neck in a transport of joy over any little pleasure, as she did with Emmy, that she never did with her father.

Was this coldness of heart in Siword real or only apparent? Did there lie under that unvarying mask of calmness and composure, warmth of feeling or cold indifference? Had a youth passed without father and mother, and among strangers, suppressed the evidence of warm feelings, or the warm feelings themselves? These were riddles which Emmy tried in vain to solve.

Her interest in the child, who nestled in her affections more and more every day, made her watch Siword with special attention.

Would the warm heart of the little girl be chilled by his coldness, or would his melt under the warmth which glowed from hers? But if Siword's hidden thoughts and aspirations were a riddle to Emmy, the key to its solution was not easily found by any one.

Siword Hiddema talked much and agreeably ; his company was a great addition to any society, and there were few men who so seldom spoke of themselves as he did.

He was communicative enough about his plans for the future ; but of his past life, of his feelings and sensations, he never spoke, and there was something about him that involuntarily kept back every one from addressing him on subjects which he did not seem to wish to bring forward.

Emmy did not, however, see much of him. The purchase of Sollingen, which had been completed according to his wish, gave occasion for many journeys to and fro ; and as these had to be arranged so as to enable him to go and return the same day, it naturally ended in his establishing him-

self there altogether ; not as yet in the château itself, but in a lodging in the village ; while it was hardly ten days after the first arrival of Cousin Siword in Dilburg, that the terrible misfortune, already known to us, occurred at Beckley ; and Emmy, in the very same hour that the news of Celine's death reached the family, left her home, and took up her abode with her miserable brother. Sorrowful as the occasion was, and much as Emmy was shocked by the sudden news of Celine's death, there was yet something in these events which operated favorably on her state of mind, revived her interest in life, and aroused her faculties from the temporary stupor into which they had fallen.

The thought that it was now her duty to support Otto, and to comfort him as far as human power could do so ; to repress her own grief and feelings, in order to share more heartily in the great sorrow that had come upon her brother ; to put her own self aside, and to live and care for another ; this it was which brought into activity her generous impulses, and delivered Emmy from a selfish apathy, which sometimes springs even in a noble heart from trials such as she had experienced. And it was no easy task which devolved upon her.

When Emmy came to Otto, she found him, as it were, stunned and paralyzed by grief beside Celine's body, which he refused to leave till the day when her earthly remains were to be consigned to the grave. But he was not in a condition to pay this last honor to his wife. Sick in body and mind, hardly able to hold out in his wish to remain with her till the last moment, he fell down insensible as he was trying to walk to the carriage which was waiting for him.

Then came difficult days for Emmy, which extended themselves into weeks. Otto's condition could not exactly be called illness ; it consisted in a sort of utter prostration, in which he could do nothing but

lie on the sofa for hours without moving, and, as Emmy sometimes thought, almost without consciousness.

He could endure no one near him except Emmy. He obeyed her when she pressed him to take any food or to go to bed ; but his powers of mind seemed to be unequal to any exertion or to business, and it pained Emmy much to see him so changed, so emaciated, so aged, without her being able to devise anything which could awaken in him a new interest in life.

She sat by him from morning till night. With unfailing courage she tried every day afresh to excite his attention in all sorts of ways, and to rouse his interest, constantly hoping and trusting that her efforts, unsuccessful to-day, would be crowned with success on the morrow.

One day, when Otto had fallen asleep after dinner, Emmy took advantage of the short interval of rest to walk up and down the terrace.

She had seldom of late gone out of doors, and the soft summer air of a July afternoon, and the south wind which played through her hair and cooled her forehead, gave her an indescribable sense of well-being. She had not been there many minutes, when footsteps on the gravel walk between the gate and the terrace made her look up, and she went to meet Siword Hiddema with a friendly greeting.

During the past weeks Siword had taken possession of his house at Sollingen, but his little daughter still remained at Dilburg, until he could have some rooms in the château made habitable for her, and for the reception of the governess to whom he was about to entrust her.

Siword, as well as the family and many friends of Otto's, had been several times at Beckley, but except for a few minutes when he had seen Emmy, he had been no better received than any one else. When people were convinced that Otto was in earnest in

wishing to be alone, they had mostly stayed away, and Beckley was more quiet and solitary than ever. The solitude and stillness, as if the house were deserted, began to oppress Emmy by its long duration, and made her welcome with real pleasure not only Siword, but the change which his arrival might produce.

"How are you going on here, Emmy?"

"Alas ! always the same. Otto will see no one ; he continues dull and listless, and as yet time seems to have brought no alleviation to his grief."

"This must not go on," said Siword, in a decided tone.

"No ; I feel myself that it cannot go on long ; but every day I begin to see more and more my own powerlessness to bring about any alteration, and Otto cannot or will not help me."

For a moment Siword made no answer. He looked with interest into Emmy's face, which was pale, and said in an earnest and almost fatherly tone—

"Child, you look pale. Is anything the matter with you ?"

Emmy assured him in a few words of her own perfect well-being, and asked immediately after Seyna, whilst her eyes expressed the warmest interest.

"The little lady is very unhappy at the departure of Cousin Emmy," said Siword, smiling ; "every time I come to Dilburg, she asks me when I am going to bring you back again, for she seems to have made up her mind that it is my fault that you went away. Fortunately, a great love for children has manifested itself in Mina, and she does all she possibly can to supplant you in Seyna's affections, but hitherto without much success."

A satirical expression on Siword's lips made Emmy smile involuntarily, for what he said agreed so entirely with what she had herself noticed, when she heard Mina, who had never before given herself any trouble about children, speak to Seyna in

Siword's presence with tender and caressing words, and saw her ostentatiously display a love which the little girl, with all the honesty which is only to be found undegenerated in the hearts of little children and dogs, had met with particular coldness.

Siword and Emmy had been standing talking to each other in this way in front of the house ; but without answering his last remark she exclaimed, somewhat suddenly—

" I ought to have asked you to come in, for you must be tired with your walk, but I can offer you nothing more than a chair, for if Otto wakes, I must go and sit with him. The housekeeper will make a cup of tea for you, if you like."

" No, Emmy," answered Siword in the decided tone which was peculiar to him, " when Otto wakes you must take me in to him."

" I dare not. He has strictly forbidden me to let any one, whoever it may be, come in to him."

" We will do it, however—unasked is unrefused. In the worst case, should Otto be angry, his very wrath itself would do him good, as it would rouse him out of his apathy."

Emmy was silent; she hesitated to try this experiment, and yet she dared not oppose the will of Siword, who generally spoke with a decision which excluded all contradiction.

" Do you speak to Otto now and then, Emmy, about his wife ?"

" I have tried once or twice, but it seemed to give him pain, and as yet he has never answered me."

" And since then you have avoided the subject ?" resumed Siword, looking at her with a smile.

" What else could I do ?"

" That I hope to show you presently."

They walked in silence up and down the terrace ; and a quarter of an hour later, Emmy with a beating heart took him to the

door of Otto's room, while she herself went back to the terrace to continue her walk.

Restless and uncertain respecting the venture of admitting any one to her brother, contrary to his strict orders, it was impossible for her to fix her thoughts on anything else but the meeting of Siword and Otto.

She was forced to acknowledge that a change in Otto's condition was urgently necessary, and that certainly no one could exercise more influence over him than Siword Hiddema ; but she was in the highest degree uneasy as to how Otto would take this visit, for which she felt she was partly to blame.

Twice she slipped up-stairs to the door of Otto's room. The first time she heard the voice of Siword, who seemed to be addressing Otto ; and the second time, to her great joy, she also heard Otto's voice, which convinced her that a conversation was taking place between them. More than an hour passed, however, before Emmy heard Siword calling for her, and in a few minutes she was in Otto's room.

But what a change had this room undergone ! Emmy could scarcely believe her eyes when she saw that the blinds, which had been closed at Otto's wish, were open, and that the cheerful daylight had replaced the half darkness which had reigned in the room during the weeks of sorrow ; but now the sweet-scented summer air came in unhindered through the open windows.

At one of these windows sat Otto in a large chair ; his face was turned away from Emmy, and his eyes wandered over the beautiful landscape glowing red in the evening sun ; his eyelids were swollen by fresh-shed tears ; but the unnatural rigidness which had marked his countenance since Celine's death had vanished.

When Emmy came nearer, he turned towards her, put out his hand to her, and said gently—

"Emmy dear, till to-day I have been altogether ungrateful for your good care of me. Forgive me!"

Tears rushed into Emmy's eyes, and she was unable to answer.

She kissed Otto, and cast a grateful glance at Siword, who, standing by the window, appeared to pay no attention to the little scene between brother and sister; but he now turned round, and said in a lively, encouraging tone—

"Now, Emmy, you must make us a cup of tea, and then let us come and sit sociably together."

If Emmy was surprised at the alteration of Otto's room, she was still more surprised in the course of the evening at the alteration in Otto himself.

The unnatural tension of his mind since Celine's death appeared to have given way, and to have been replaced by a grave, sorrowful mood, which, however, no longer excluded all interest in other things.

Of his own accord he now began to speak to Siword and Emmy about Celine. Without going into the details of the sad circumstances under which her death had taken place, he told them that it was not in peace that they had separated that morning, but that the look given him by Celine with her dying eyes had afforded him the tranquillizing conviction that they had parted in love and peace.

He spoke, too, of the powerlessness which he had felt in himself to make her permanently happy; and then, again, he plunged into recollections, in which all the later period of his married life seemed obliterated, and he appeared to think only of the days when his heart was filled with admiration and passionate love for her.

Siword did not at first try to oppose the outpouring of Otto's grief. On the contrary, he brought back the conversation whenever it threatened to wander from the subject, and thus gave Otto an opportunity of giving vent to all the long pent-up feel-

ings with which his mind had been full. And gradually, almost imperceptibly, he contrived at last to give the conversation another turn, and to excite Otto's interest by all kinds of stories, with which his various travels had plentifully supplied him. How pleasant this evening appeared to Emmy in comparison with the sad weeks of late, I can hardly describe to you. And that evening a feeling of respect and regard for Siword Hiddema established itself in her heart which never left her under all the various circumstances of her life.

"If I believed in magic I should accuse you of being in league with the black art, Siword," said Emmy, smiling, when on his departure she accompanied him to the terrace. "Thank you a thousand times for coming."

"I must in honor confess to you, Emmy, that the result of my efforts has far surpassed my expectations; but the mystery of the magic consists simply in this, that experience has taught me what Otto must feel, and I knew how to find the chords which have their echo in his heart."

Emmy walked in silence with Siword a few steps. This was the first time since she had known him that he had alluded to his deceased wife.

A certain timidity restrained her from proceeding with this subject, although she would willingly have said a word to him testifying her sympathy.

But before she could think of anything quite suitable, the pause had already continued too long for her to come back to the subject, whilst the seriousness which spread over his countenance restrained her from at once turning the conversation.

Somewhat confused, she stopped to give him her hand at parting.

"We shall soon see you again, shall we not?"

"As soon as ever I can; but certainly not to-morrow. To-morrow I must take

your family to Sollingen and be their host all day. I need not tell you, Emmy, that it would be with greater pleasure if you could be of the party."

Keeping hold of her hand, which she had held out to him, he looked into her eyes as he said these words with a long earnest look, which made Emmy involuntarily blush and become confused.

She drew her hand back, and said as calmly as possible, "It vexes me also that I cannot see Sollingen, Siword; but of course I must not be missed by Otto."

"No, of course not," he answered in his cool, calm, ordinary tone, and taking leave of her, he pursued his way to the gate.

On the second day after Siword's visit to Beckley, as Emmy had gone to her room after breakfast to write a letter, she was called down-stairs, and found Siword Hidema in the sitting-room holding Seyna by the hand.

With a cry of joy the child sprang to meet Emmy, and when Emmy stooped to kiss her, Seyna threw her arms round Emmy's neck, clinging tightly to her in the delight of seeing her again. There was something in the heartiness of the little girl which touched Emmy, and when she got loose from Seyna to greet Siword, there was a moisture in the blue eyes which looked at him.

"You must let the child stay here today, Siword; we find it absolutely necessary that we should be together—don't we, Seyna?"

The child looked wistfully at her father, and curiously, as if from the expression of her father's countenance she would gather the fulfilment of her wish.

But Siword answered that look as little as Emmy's question.

"Seyna," he said, bringing the child to the open door, which led on to the terrace, "do you see that red flower in the flower-bed near the brook?"

"Yes, papa."

"Go and gather it for me."

The little girl looked up at Emmy, who nodded assent; then she obeyed immediately, and in a few moments was out of hearing.

"The fact is, I have come to bring you the child, not for to-day only, but for a good long time; at least if you will be good enough to receive her. You know," he continued, "that this week I was expecting the governess under whose care Seyna was to be placed at Sollingen. Yesterday I received intelligence that she is ill, and that several weeks must elapse before she will be well enough to enter upon her duties. I cannot let the child be so long with Mrs. Welters, and I have come to the resolution to ask your aid in this matter."

"And you would not ask me if you did not know how glad I should be to have her," said Emmy, heartily; "but, Siword, what will mamma say? I am sure she will take it ill."

"Very possibly," said Siword, coolly; "but it is a matter of indifference to me who may take it ill when the welfare of my child is concerned. The way in which the family manage her does not please me; it may be with good intentions that they give way to her in every thing, and overload her with sweetmeats from morning till night. It is, however, too contrary to my theory of education to be endured any longer. In your own intercourse with Seyna I have observed you often enough to know that with you she runs no risk of being sacrificed to a mischievous indulgence, the results of which I have too often witnessed not to wish to protect my child from it, and I should therefore entrust her to your good care with a perfect sense of security."

"And I hope not to make you repent of your confidence in me, Siword; but I must urgently entreat you to make mamma clearly understand that the child's coming here is not my doing."

"Naturally." The word was pronounced by Siword as coldly and decidedly as if the objections of Mrs. Welters, which Emmy had learnt to fear like every one else in her step-mother's house, were worthless.

Thus Seyna remained at Beckley, whilst for some weeks nothing remarkable happened ; it was a time of repose to which Emmy in later years always recurred with great pleasure.

The change which that visit of Siword's had caused in Otto's condition and state of mind promised to be of a durable kind. Dating from that evening, his reviving powers of mind and interest in life slowly but steadily increased. As I said before, the days which followed were more agreeable to Emmy than any she could recollect for years. It is true that her heart often bled when she thought of Bruno and his broken faith ; but there was nevertheless also a certain relief in the cessation of that painful uncertainty which had tortured her for so long a time ; and if all hope of good had forsaken her, yet there was repose to be found in the sad certainty which gave a clearly definite form to her sorrow. And then what a relief to Emmy it must have been to be away from her ordinary and oppressive *entourage* ; a relief to have no longer before her eyes William's gloomy, menacing countenance, and to be spared from hearing her step-mother's shrill voice resounding through the house.

How delightful it seemed to her not to be shut up in the stifling town in the fine warm weather, to see around her the fresh country air and the gloriousness of nature in its full summer beauty. What an agreeable satisfying feeling to be able to devote herself to two beings whom she loved ; to feel that she was necessary and useful to Otto and to Seyna, and that she must take care of them and be with them.

Within a few days' time the trio became inseparable : the melancholy man bowed

down by the heavy trial which weighed upon him like lead ; the young girl, who had seen her star of hope set, and was gradually recovering from the bitter experience which had passed over her like the chill of a night frost, and which if it had not annihilated the young blossoms of trust, hope, and love, had greatly damaged them : and the merry child, sporting in the full sunshine of careless childhood, and who without knowing it was awakening the two older ones in years and experience to a new life of hope and courage.

The life at Beckley might otherwise be said to be monotonous enough, and the occasional visits of the family from Dilburg were the only change in these days, of which there is little to be said except that one was just like another.

To read and to walk, to keep Seyna busy with her lessons, or with Otto to join in her games ; to help her brother in looking over and putting by all the things which had belonged to Celine, with warm and hearty sympathy in his variable moods ; these were now the tasks laid upon Emmy. And the old sparkle came back into her eyes ; her face recovered its roundness, and if its melancholy expression had not entirely vanished, at least the old smile, bringing back the dimples in her cheeks, would again come to her lips and enliven the soft, sad, pensive expression of her eyes.

But Siword's visits afforded the most change and the greatest source of pleasure to the present residents at Beckley.

Sometimes he would spend a long evening, now and then a whole day, or sometimes he would even sleep there ; but whenever he came he always brought with him cheerfulness and sociability.

Generally when he came to Beckley, Emmy left him for hours alone with Otto, and nothing seemed to have such a good effect upon Otto, as these meetings with Siword, which usually ended in long walks about the woods and lanes of the estate, in

which Emmy and Seyna accompanied them.

But these good days for Emmy were speedily to be brought to a close.

On a certain day in July, Otto and Emmy were sitting in the verandah behind the house waiting for Siword and Seyna, who had gone on a visit to some acquaintances at Arnheim.

Emmy had already made several vain attempts to enter into conversation with Otto, who, quite different to what he had been during the last week, sat beside her still and pensive, and gazing at her as if in a dream, till he said suddenly—

"Emmy, things cannot go on like this with me. Siword is right; I must not give way any longer to the sickly state of mind which masters me and makes me incapable of any exertion. I must go away from here."

Surprised and alarmed, Emmy looked at her brother.

"Away from here, Otto? And where to?"

"Siword says that travelling is the only thing which will restore the balance of my mind, and at least I will try it."

Emmy started up from her chair, and standing close to Otto laid her hand on his shoulder, and looking at him with her eyes sparkling with excitement, she asked him in an anxious tone—

"Then I may go with you, Otto, may I not? Then we will go together through the wide, wide world!"—

But Otto would not let her say any more.

"No, Emmy," he said, shaking his head with a sorrowful expression in his eyes, "as certainly as I feel that I must go, so certainly I know that I must go alone. If it is to do me any good, I must be alone among strangers, where no one and nothing can remind me of what I have suffered here. And then I could not take a young lady in the places where I wish to travel. Algiers, Egypt, Palestine, and Persia are the countries I hope to visit, and you would not be

able to bear the privations and difficulties of such a tour, which rather attract me than otherwise."

"Otto! I did so wish to remain with you. I am so much happier here than at home," and, bursting into tears, she laid her head upon his shoulder.

"My dear, good Emmy!" said Otto, deeply moved, and embracing her, "Heaven knows what good your presence has done me; but to take you with me is impossible. I shall certainly not be away more than a year; have patience till then, my dear little sister. If you do not feel happy at home on my return we can live together, and I hope then to have an opportunity of rewarding you for all the goodness which you have shown me during this sad time."

He kissed her tenderly, but disengaged himself gently from her, and left the verandah deeply affected.

Emmy went back to her seat, and resting her head upon the iron garden table before her, she sobbed and cried as if her heart would break.

Latterly she had lived on from day to day without anxiety for the future, and had enjoyed her life with Otto as if it were always to be so, and the very possibility of the blow which had fallen upon her had never entered her head.

The idea of returning to Dilburg, to her step-mother's, where was her natural home, drove her to despair; and becoming more and more agitated, she sobbed so that her whole frame shook. . . .

"Child, what is the matter?" said all at once a well-known voice close to her; and Emmy looking up in alarm, met the eyes of Siword Hiddema, which were resting on her with gentle earnestness.

Emmy's only answer was to hide her face in her hands again, and to sob more than ever.

The next moment her head was gently raised, and her cold, trembling hands lay in those of Siword, and once more he asked

her, in a more tender tone than she had ever heard him use to any one—

"My child, what makes you so unhappy?"

It was still some little time before she could compose herself sufficiently to be able to speak. Meanwhile, he waited patiently till she had recovered herself.

"Otto is going to travel," Emmy whispered at last.

"And does that make you so unhappy?" asked Siword, surprised, and smiling as he looked into her tearful eyes.

This made her eyes overflow again, as she said. "He—he means to go alone—without me."

"Naturally," answered Siword, decisively. "In the journey he proposes to take, you could not accompany him, and under the circumstances I believe it is better for him to travel alone."

Gradually Emmy became more calm, and withdrawing her hand from Siword's, she pushed back her disordered hair from her forehead.

"You will think me quite foolish, Siword, but it came upon me so unexpectedly, and I was so happy here," she added softly, as the treacherous tears again glistened in her eyes.

"And you dread going back to a home where you are not happy? Have I not guessed right, Emmy?"

She hung down her head without answering.

"If it is that which grieves you," added Siword, in his usual calm tone, "then you need not go back home unless you wish it; at least not for long."

"O Siword, what else can I do?"

"Why, go with Seyna and me to Sollingen."

Without looking at him or altering her position, Emmy shrugged her shoulders, and said despairingly, "That cannot be."

"It can be, Emmy, but of course only in one way."

With an inquiring look, Emmy turned her face towards him; but it must have been that his eyes spoke another language than was expressed by his calm words and the half smile which played on his lips. At least, at the first glance, Emmy saw what he meant, and what it was which filled her with such great alarm.

"If you will be my wife, and come to Solingen as Seyna's mother, Emmy, you will be welcomed by two warm hearts whom you will make happy by your presence."

A long silence followed these words of Siword.

The confusion and distress into which Emmy was thrown by this unexpected proposal, rendered her speechless. Her face, which had been red with weeping, now became deadly pale, whilst strong emotion made her heart beat painfully and violently.

Once more Siword took her hand gently in his.

More in the tone of a father than of a lover, he said to her, gently but earnestly:

"Child, you are disturbed and nervous, and you must not come to any decision. I know full well that I who am so much older, can make no pretensions to the love of a young lady like you, and if you had had a happy home I should scarcely have dared to have asked you. Consider seriously, therefore, whether you think you would be happy as my wife; and if you feel you may expect more happiness in the future than I can give you, then you must say, No. Tell me your mind unreservedly, and rest assured that you will always find in me a heartily sympathizing friend, be your decision what it may."

Before he released her hand, he bent down to imprint a hasty kiss on it. Siword Hiddema then left her alone.

CHAPTER XX.

THE DREAM IN THE CHURCHYARD.

AGAIN a few weeks have passed by.

Otto has carried his plans into execution, and has set off on his travels; whilst Emmy has gone back to her home, but not for long, for she is betrothed to Siword Hiddema, and the marriage is fixed for the end of August.

I believe that Emmy had never felt so deeply how strong her love for Bruno Eversberg still was, as at the moment when Siword Hiddema asked her to be his wife. At the first moment it seemed to her an impossibility to accept his proposal, and quite a storm of contradictory emotions arose in her heart.

In the first place, there was a feeling of deep humiliation at finding her heart still so attached to the man who was untrue to her, and who perhaps had long since forgotten her; and besides this, a strong conviction that she would be behaving dishonorably towards Siword if she were to become his wife still feeling as she did.

Had Siword required an immediate answer from her, or had he come back for an answer the very next day, without doubt he would have got a refusal.

But he did not come so speedily.

More than a week elapsed after their interview before Siword came back to Beckley, and in that week Emmy's reason had so far outweighed her feelings in the balance, that the scale turned altogether in favor of Siword's proposal. In that week of perfect quiet and solitude, she had examined all the circumstances of the position in which she was placed by the true light of day. The result of her refusal she foresaw must be, that she would have to return to the house of her step-mother, where, after Elizabeth's marriage, there would be no one left who had any regard for her, and where she saw the hatred of

William always suspended over her like a threatening sword.

And she thought of herself as the wife of Siword Hiddema, finding in him support and protection against every sorrow that the world could bring to her. Contented, and perhaps eventually happy, when the love for Bruno, which still spoke so loudly, should have been put to silence by the power of time, and when the great respect and friendly regard which she felt for Siword Hiddema should perhaps have been developed into a warmer feeling. Then she thought of herself as filling the place of Seyna's early lost mother, and also of the warm love for herself which glowed in the young heart of the child, to whom she would be all that a loving step-mother could be.

The contrast was too great!

And yet Emmy would have had more scruple in accepting the proposal of Siword had he been younger, and had he addressed her in the words of passion.

Besides, it appeared to her that the love which he asked from her was not such love as she had felt for Bruno, but that he required nothing more than the calm respect and affection which actually did exist in her mind; and then a marriage with Siword seemed to her as a haven where the storm-driven ship of her life might enter and find a safe refuge.

And yet she hesitated. Her reason having come to a decision, it seemed as if an inward voice tried to restrain her—a voice which made her doubt and hesitate, and sometimes filled her with an inexplicable feeling, as if her marriage with Siword Hiddema were a crime for which she could not answer to her conscience.

Now and then she listened to this voice, yet her reason for the most part kept the upper hand.

"It is my weakness, it is the love for Bruno, which I would tear out of my heart root and branch, and which con-

tinues to live in me against my will—a love which I will vanquish as far as it is in human power to do so, and which ought not to hinder me from giving my hand to a good man whom Heaven has sent me."

Thus reasoned Emmy; but, nevertheless, she burst into tears when she had accepted Siword.

"Child, are you sure that you will not repent?" he asked, looking into her eyes with his earnest, piercing glance; but as truly and earnestly as she then believed it, she assured him to the contrary.

And what a calmness and repose came over Emmy when the matter was once decided. How delightful was that confident feeling in Siword Hiddema's protecting love, which did not display itself in words or caresses, but in a hundred trifles which daily proved that he thought and cared for her with an entire absence of selfishness.

In their behavior to each other, outwardly at least, there was none of that passion which is generally remarked in betrothed persons, but something of that calm, confiding love which is the beautiful relation between man and wife who have been bound together for years by a happy marriage.

There was that in Siword's nature which had the effect of producing in Emmy a peculiar tranquillity of mind. She looked up to him without being afraid of him. She was proud of all the noble qualities which she discovered, the deeper she penetrated into the knowledge of his character. She was grateful for the love he bore to her, which she believed and inferred rather than knew from demonstrations on his part, which would have been difficult for her to respond to.

Perfect, nevertheless, Siword Hiddema was not; and if Emmy had wished to alter anything in him it was that great degree of decision which, as the distinctive mark of his whole nature, had both its light and its shadow side.

If Emmy had not been so entirely imbued with the consciousness that in all things she could rely with confidence on Siword's clear judgment and strict justice, there might have been something in this decisiveness which would have made her anxious as to her future happiness. But with the knowledge which she acquired more and more every day of his character, she gave herself up without fear to his decision; and the belief that there was some one who thought and cared for her filled her with the long-wanting calm and rest.

Yet but a few days had passed since their betrothal before Emmy's conscience began to speak, and her mind became possessed with the conviction that it was her duty to acquaint Siword with the relations which had existed between herself and Bruno. Siword himself spoke very little, if at all, of his past life, without, however, avoiding any question which Emmy might put to him; but this little communicativeness of his own accord made her unwilling to touch upon his earlier life. On the other hand, he seemed to listen with the greatest interest to all she told him of her mother and Aunt Emmy, who still lived so vividly in her grateful recollection; but no question ever passed his lips that could lead to the subject upon which she considered it her duty to speak to him before their marriage.

Frequently, during the long walks they took together, in some accidental moment of silence the idea came to Emmy to say the important word, the mere thought of which made her tremble and shake; but day after day went by, and the time for Otto's departure had already arrived before she found courage to avail herself of a suitable opportunity when she was alone with Siword to make her confession.

"Siword, there is something which I ought to tell you."

"Indeed, child," he said, plucking a geranium from the flower-bed by which

they were standing, and whilst admiring the flower, paying no attention to Emmy's disturbed countenance. "Something interesting, I hope?"

In the first moment, Emmy was not in a state to answer him, her heart beat so. Then she said, with a hesitating voice—

"Something which happened before—when—before I learnt to know you, Siword."

"Perceiving her emotion, Siword threw away the flower, put Emmy's hand through his arm, and looked earnestly in her face, which betrayed signs of great confusion and emotion.

"Is it necessary that I should know it, Emmy?" he asked.

"I believe, Siword, that it is my duty to tell you."

"But a duty that is disagreeable to you?"

When she was silent and seemed to hesitate, he said, in a cordial, earnest tone, "Child, I believe I can guess what it is that you think you ought to tell me. I know well that one must pay a very early visit to a young lady in order to be the first to whom she opens her heart. As I have learnt to know you, I am too thoroughly convinced that there is nothing in your past life at which you need blush, not to feel that you could make any communication connected with the past with a quiet conscience. Don't speak of it any more, dear Emmy. To-day belongs to us. Whatever love and sorrow lies behind in the life of either of us, we will leave undisturbed, and look forward to the future, which at least smiles to me in a manner that I never dared to expect in this world."

It was as if the words of Siword had lifted off Emmy's heart a weight which pressed upon her like lead. With a fearless expression, she looked up at him gratefully, and the words which she spoke surged up from the very depths of her heart.

"Siword, God bless you for all your goodness to me. You have nothing to fear in trusting me. The man whom I loved is married and lost to me; and if his memory, even to-day, casts a shadow over my happiness, from this time forth it shall leave me. To me also as your wife the future smiles, and may Heaven help me to make you as happy as my heart wishes!"

Siword made no answer.

He bent down to kiss her face, which glowed with emotion; and as he pressed her to his heart, Emmy experienced the blissful sensation of peace and security after the storms which had passed over her.

And this feeling accompanied her to the house of her step-mother, to whom Siword had imparted his engagement, and with whom he had arranged all that was necessary, so that Emmy on coming home found everything settled, and readily gave her consent to the early completion of the marriage.

The day on which Otto, Emmy, and Seyna parted from each other had been a sorrowful one.

All Siword's powers of persuasion were necessary to make Otto persevere in carrying out his plan, for every day, as the time for starting on his tour approached, he became more vacillating and wavering, and when he actually did set off it was with tears that the three took leave of each other.

On the same day that Otto started and Emmy returned to Dilburg, Seyna was taken by Siword to Sollingen, where the governess had at length arrived.

Emmy would have liked very much to accompany Siword to Sollingen, in order to make acquaintance with her future home, but as it was the frequently expressed wish of her intended husband that she should not see Sollingen until he conducted her there as his wife, Emmy would not speak of it.

"If I were still about to buy Sollingen," said he, "then it would naturally be a matter of great interest to me that the place should please you; but as in any case it must be your home, I wish you to see it for the first time in the best possible light, and I will reserve for myself the chaos which precedes the getting it in order."

In the weeks before the marriage Siword went continually backwards and forwards between Dilburg and Sollingen, which were distant from each other two hours by railway, or three hours in driving by a cross country road.

And these weeks were more agreeable to Emmy than he could have ventured to hope.

Mrs. Welters, cold as ever, nevertheless helped with a certain readiness in the many preparations which had to be made in the short time. Mina was away on a visit, and was not to return till after the wedding; and Elizabeth, zealous for Emmy's interest as always, had never shown herself more cordial and useful than now when she was on the point of separating from her.

The only one who seemed much disturbed by this last period before the marriage was William de Graaff—William, with his pale, worn countenance, that would have excited Emmy's compassion, had she not observed with some fear, as before, the angry looks, full of hate, which he cast on her. In words, he uttered nothing. If possible he was even less talkative than before, and his restlessness seemed to have reached such a height that it was impossible for him to sit still.

Instead of sitting silently with a book before him, he now walked up and down the room with restless steps the whole evening; and any of the family who ventured to remark upon it, received for answer an angry retort to mind their own business and let him alone.

I believe that his mother conjectured something, although not the whole truth, of what was passing in him.

Her anxious looks frequently rested on him. Her voice lost somewhat of its ordinary harsh tone when she addressed him, as if it were softened by a compassionate tenderness, and more than once Emmy met her piercing eyes, as if they were inquiring of her the confirmation of what she observed in William.

Strengthened by the feeling of her own innocence, Emmy endured these inquiring looks as calmly as possible; but even if it were only on account of William, and the uneasiness which his behavior continued to cause her, she was thankful for the prospect of soon going into a new neighborhood.

She hoped that absence would calm down the feeling that had been transformed in William de Graaff from passionate love to hate, and would gradually restore the balance of his mind; and that whatever she might have to fear from him while at home would find its natural termination in her departure.

But in these last weeks before the marriage Emmy had not much time for reflection.

There was so much to provide, so many preparations to think of; so much to do and to order; so much to consult about with Siword as to the arrangements of their house; so much to choose and to inspect, that Emmy's days flew like minutes.

In the evenings Elizabeth came to Emmy's room under pretence of brushing her hair in Emmy's company, but really in order to chatter, sometimes till midnight, about the future, and all the rose-colored dreams which surrounded Elizabeth's intended marriage.

The similarity of both their positions as intended brides produced a greater intimacy between Emmy and Elizabeth than had ever before existed, notwithstanding

their previous friendship for each other, and the near approach of their separation seemed to draw them still closer together.

When Elizabeth went at last to her own room, sleep did not require to be waited for by Emmy, after a long troublesome day, and with the dawn of the following morning the pressure of business recommenced as before.

So passed the time with Emmy as in a species of intoxication in which both herself and her earlier sensations and emotions were lost.

The first week—the second week—the third week—and Siword and Emma were betrothed; three, four, five, six, seven days—and, as in a fast gallop, when there is nothing on which the eye can rest, when sky and water, mountain and valley, tree and bush melt together in a confused panorama, and the only sensation is that one is rushing forward—so everything hurried on and on till the last day before Emmy's marriage.

All was in order—the trunks were packed. Siword had gone for the last time to Sollingen to bring back Seyna, who was to attend the ceremony on the following day. Elizabeth was taking a walk with Lieutenant Smit, and Emmy was alone in her room, sitting before the window in that favorite spot where, during all the time of her stay in her parental home, she had suffered so much sorrow, had wrestled with so much fear, where once cheerful dreams and visions of the future had visited her, and where a few months back she had sunk down in despairing sorrow.

Many thoughts and sensations pressed upon her in that hour. She pictured to herself how on an evening like this a daughter would feel who was leaving her father and mother and her happy home to follow the husband of her choice.

Involuntarily her thoughts took a definite form, and she gazed upon a vision—

her father and mother still alive, and Bruno Eversberg her bridegroom.

The next moment, however, Emmy started up from her chair. It seemed as if she had wakened from a strange dream which had lasted for weeks.

It appeared to her an impossibility that it could be herself who was to be married on the morrow, and not to him of whom, in this self-same room, she had thought with so much love, and for whom she had prayed so fervently every evening.

The reality of the actual condition of things came upon her with overwhelming force. She tried to put it away from herself. She would be true even in thought to him who to-morrow was to be her husband. She would compel herself to think of all the blessings which she might expect with an upright man like Siword. But notwithstanding all her efforts she could not get rid of that restless, indescribable feeling which every now and then made her heart beat quicker, her cheeks blush without a cause, and filled her with a nameless anxiety. This feeling dated from her betrothal with Siword. It did not exist in his presence, which had a calming effect upon her, but came over her on the few occasions in which she was alone and could think.

Her room seemed intolerably narrow and stifling; and without any definite object, except to drive away the feeling, she betook herself to the garden, where she walked up and down sunk in thought.

As she stood by one of the flower beds, a thought all at once flashed upon her which brought the color to her cheeks.

She recollects with a feeling of shame how she had been in the habit of going from time to time to the churchyard to visit the graves of her parents and of the parents of Bruno, and how she had discontinued this practice since the day when Bruno's faithlessness had become known to her. Since that day she had never been able to

think of him in so gentle and forgiving a mood as now upon the evening before her marriage. All the bitterness which had so long tortured her heart made way for the mournful tenderness with which we remember a departed friend whose life has been a source both of joy and sorrow, but a source which has been dried up by the all-annihilating power of death.

In this frame of mind Emmy resolved to pay a farewell visit to the churchyard where her beloved dead rested, and to strew flowers over their graves as a thank-offering to the loving recollections which she retained of them.

With a basket of fresh-plucked flowers in her hand, a light straw hat on her fair hair, a shawl loosely thrown about her to protect her from the evening chill, which after the heat of the day was coming on with the last rays of the setting sun, Emmy went out by the gate at the end of the garden, along a shorter path which led by some back streets to the town-wall and through the town-gate to the churchyard outside. The walk did Emmy good; it calmed her feelings, and when she reached the quiet burial-ground and had seated herself upon the bench nearest the graves of Bruno's parents, whilst her eyes rested upon the marble memorial of her father, there came peace and rest into her soul.

She had sat thus more than half-an-hour, and had divided the flowers between the two graves, yet she could not resolve to leave the peaceful stillness of the churchyard. She listened to the wind, which sighed through the weeping willows. She looked at the tombstones and monuments, which in the approaching twilight assumed strange forms and appearances; and wearied perhaps with the strain of the last few days and the heat of the weather, she felt her eyelids grow heavier and heavier and her ideas become confused, till sleep made her head sink down and her spirit lost itself in the land of dreams.

And a strange dream it was which visited Emmy.

She dreamt that she was dead, and that she lay in her coffin as she had seen her mother lie, motionless, and with her eyes closed, although at the same time she could see all that was going on about her. All those whom she loved hovered round her like shadows, and greeted and beckoned to her, but indistinctly as if in a mist.

Two forms, however, disengaged themselves from the mist, and becoming more and more distinct, approached her on either side of the coffin; and, although in her death-like trance she was not able to see them, she felt that Siword and Bruno were standing leaning against the sides of the coffin.

With a supernatural exertion she at last opened her eyes, and still she could not see them; but instead, the eyes of William de Graaff—those gray eyes, with the well-known look of mortal hate—glared at her out of the mist which veiled everything. . . . She shrank back, and the chilliness of death seemed to pierce her to the very bones. . . . At that moment a warm hand was laid upon her head, and crying out and wavering between dream and reality, Emmy looked up, and saw Siword Hiddema standing before her, and heard him say in his well-known voice, "Child! child! how very imprudent of you to be sleeping in this night air."

She got up, shivering with cold and with the recollection of the dream, which had left behind it a strange, fear-exciting impression. Clinging to Siword's arm, and pressing close to him, she walked from the churchyard along the dark lane, where the light of the clear starry heaven did not penetrate. She listened in silence to his gentle scolding for her imprudence. She understood but half of what he said; how the open gate at the end of the garden had given him a clue as to where she was gone when, on his return, she could not be

found either in the house or in the garden. Only by slow degrees she recovered her calmness, and as she walked home she was more silent than Siword had ever before seen her, and she hardly found words before they reached the house to ask after Seyna.

"I promised her if she would let Elizabeth put her to bed quietly to bring you to her," said Siword.

When they came up-stairs to the child's bed, they found her already asleep, with her dark curly head sunk deep in the pillow, and her little soft white arms resting on the coverlet.

Full of tenderness Emmy leant over the little girl. Once more the conflicting emotions of that day were dissolved into a feeling of peace and harmony, and turning to Siword she said gently and earnestly, "Siword, you must help me to be a good mother to her!"

For answer, Siword took Emmy in his arms and pressed her to his heart, and for once abandoning his ordinary calmness, he whispered softly to her, for fear of awaking the child, words as full of tenderness and passion as the youngest lover could have uttered, and they came to Emmy as the first manifestation of the fire which smouldered under the cool surface, and gave a new field for thought and solicitude, till at last the day came to an end.

A short, restless night, full of perplexing dreams, and the wedding day of Siword and Emmy had dawned—a day so like all other wedding days, that I really don't know how to mention anything particular, always excepting the ceremony itself.

When Emmy woke, it was under the caresses of Seyna, who with bare feet had got out of her crib and had come quietly into Emmy's room and climbed into her bed. She took the child in her arms and listened to her childish prattle, which cheered her heart like a sunbeam, and prevented her from realizing the seriousness of the important day before her.

The whole morning, up to the last moment, she kept the child with her, and dressed her before she began her own toilet; and with her little daughter in her hand, she came down to meet her bridegroom when the moment had arrived to set off for the town-hall. Now, for the first time, the consciousness of the high serious interest of the day seemed to reach her, and it was a trembling cold hand which was laid in the calm, strong grasp of her bridegroom, and a deadly pale countenance which met his earnest, loving eyes. Then it all seemed to Emmy like a dream again, as in the last few weeks, and as in a dream they went first to the town-hall, then to the church, all in the proper order; and an hour later Siword and Emmy were man and wife.

The *déjeuner* that followed was like all festivals of the same kind; the proper dishes appeared, the usual wines were drunk, the usual toasts given, and even the usual tears shed by Elizabeth, who, inconsolable at the departure of Emmy, began to cry very early in the day, and threw Lieutenant Smit into despair in his vain attempts to comfort her.

Mrs. Welters followed the bride when she left the table to change her bridal dress for her travelling dress; and the same cold kiss on the forehead, with which the step-mother had once received her step-daughter was the farewell between them.

Emmy would fain have said a cordial word to the widow of her father, but it was as if her lips refused to speak what her heart did not dictate. In silent emotion Emmy gazed at her, whilst Mrs. Welters turned away to go back to the company, and she herself quickly went up-stairs.

A few moments later, whilst one of the guests was endeavoring to enliven the somewhat languid cheerfulness of the party by some improvised verses, which engaged general attention, there sounded all at once a strange noise as of a scream up-stairs. Before any one comprehended

what was going on, Siword and Elizabeth had sprung up and rushed out of the room, while at the same moment the company were thrown into fresh confusion by the breaking of a glass carafe (which William de Graaff let fall out of his hands), and the contents of which streamed down over the beautiful silk dress of his neighbor.

In the confusion of the moment, Mrs. Welters broke up the party at breakfast, and the company adjourned to the drawing-room looking into the garden, where they crowded to the piano; and the merriment, which had been interrupted for an instant, had well-nigh returned when Elizabeth came back and declared that the scream which they thought they had heard was mere imagination.

Siword and Elizabeth indeed had found Emmy's door locked, and to their anxious questions whether anything was the matter with her, she had given a tranquillizing answer, but had refused to open the door on the plea that she was dressing.

It crossed Siword's mind that her voice sounded harsh and strange; but as Elizabeth had gone down-stairs quite satisfied, he did not like to trouble Emmy with further inquiries.

Changing his own dress in haste, he found it impossible to go back to the company; he waited therefore outside her room, walking up and down in an anxiety which he could not explain to himself, listening to every sound which came from the room. Nearly an hour passed, when the servants came to inform him that the carriage was ready, and upon his repeated knocking, Emmy opened the door and stood upon the threshold. Siword, in great alarm, drew a step backwards when he saw the countenance of his young wife—a countenance so strangely altered as scarcely to be recognized from what she was an hour before as she stood by his side a beautiful but pale bride.

She had been extraordinarily pale the

whole day; but what was that paleness compared with the death-like pallor which now was spread over her face? What was the meaning of the blue, lead-colored lips—the fixed eyes, with their despairing look, and her painfully altered features?

"Good heavens, Emmy, what has happened?" exclaimed Siword, when he had overcome his first speechless alarm.

Emmy slowly passed her hand over her forehead, as if to bring her confused thoughts into words; and when he once again hastily repeated his question, she answered in a dull voice, almost without sound—

"Nothing, nothing! take me away from here, or I shall go mad;" and grasping Siword's arm, she drew him forward down the stairs.

In the passage Elizabeth and Seyna were waiting for her.

She accepted their embraces, then she disengaged herself, and was already sitting in the carriage before her husband had reached the hall door. An instant later the carriage drove away.

CHAPTER XXI.

SOLLINGEN.

"We must decide to-day about the rooms, Emmy. Would you like to stay here some time longer, or to go on with our tour?"

"Just as you like, Siword."

"No, not just as I like, but as it is most agreeable to you. Do you feel well enough to go on farther?"

"Oh yes."

"Shall we go to the Kurhaus once more this evening? You have seen very little of it since we have been here. Or shall we accomplish our intended expedition to the Platte?"

"It is quite the same to me, Siword; do as you think best."

It was thus that, listlessly and without

the slightest sign of interest, Emmy answered the questions of her husband, whilst she leant back in her chair, with her eyes half closed and her back turned to the beautiful prospect which their room on the *bel étage* of the hotel of the "Four Seasons" at Wiesbaden commanded, comprising the Kurhaus and its pretty pleasant grounds, where the choicest flowers were interspersed with fountains, of which the fresh splashing sound reached their ears.

Her listless, indifferent tone, however, did not seem to be regarded by her husband as anything unusual—at any rate, he did not appear to notice it. Seated in a comfortable arm-chair opposite Emmy, he took up his book again, after this short conversation, and apparently became wholly occupied in reading; but if any one had watched him closely, they would have remarked his troubled look as his eyes wandered now and then from his book to the pale, worn face of his young wife, who in the fortnight since her marriage seemed to have grown ten years older.

And there also lay on Siword's own face a shade of seriousness approaching to sternness; but a gentler expression came over it when, upon a deep sigh which seemed almost involuntarily to escape from Emmy's breast, he laid down his book at once and went up to her.

Drawing his chair near her, he took one of her hands in his, and said, in a gentle but earnest tone—

"Dear Emmy, things cannot go on as they now are between us. Day after day I have waited patiently till you should give me your confidence. I have not teased you with a single question, but I have acted as if I had not observed that anything ailed you, even in the night when you thought I was asleep, and I saw you get up and go to the other end of the room and weep in your distress. I have let it all pass apparently unobserved, in the hope that of yourself you would come

to me as your best friend; but I cannot look on at this any longer, and I earnestly entreat you to tell me what is the matter?"

He remained silent, as if waiting for her answer; but Emmy withdrew her hand from his and covered her face with it, without saying anything. When Siword resumed, in a pressing tone, "I think, Emmy, that as your husband I have the fullest right to your confidence," she cried out, in a despairing voice, whilst she rose up from her half-lying position—

"O Siword, Siword! be merciful to me, and do not torture me so! I cannot tell you what grieves me. Have patience with me, and perhaps I shall learn to bear it."

Siword turned pale at these words of his wife. He rose from his chair, and with an involuntary movement drew back a few paces before he answered—

"You confess that there is something amiss with you, and yet you persist in your silence. Reflect, Emmy, that this is an important moment as regards our whole future life. When entire confidence does not exist between man and wife, happiness and love are impossible."

He was again silent, in anxious expectation of her answer.

But Emmy answered not.

She looked pale as death, and while she clenched her hands convulsively, her fixed and tearless eyes had the timid, wistful expression of a hunted animal, which sees no escape nor any hiding-place where to conceal itself—an expression which Siword found almost unbearable.

Turning away from her, he walked up and down the room in strong emotion; and when he again stood before Emmy, all gentleness had vanished from his face. In a cold tone he said—

"Make your mind easy, Emmy! I shall not trouble you further. It is not my habit to thrust myself into any one's confidence, and I will not do so with you.

Keep your sorrow to yourself, as you do not place sufficient trust in me to let me share it. I give you my sacred promise that this is the first and last time I shall ask you for it. I must, however, beg you to understand that we must not continue our tour. Under these circumstances it cannot give any pleasure to you or to me."

The cold tone of her husband seemed to cut Emmy to the heart; she shuddered when he talked of returning home.

Before he could prevent her, she had slipped from her chair on to her knees, and taking his hand, laid it on her cold, pale cheek, while she looked up at him imploringly.

"O Siword! do not speak so to me. I cannot bear it. Do not thrust me from you now that I have a double need of your patience and your love. I know how ill I repay your goodness to me, and that thus far I have not answered your expectations; still, have a little patience with me, and trust me when I say that it is better that I should bear my sorrow alone, than in common with you. I *cannot* tell you, Siword; indeed I *can-not*

For a moment Siword seemed to be moved. When Emmy at her last words burst into tears, he lifted her up and kissed her forehead before he let her go back to her chair. Shortly afterwards he left the room, and when a few hours later he returned to his wife, neither of them resumed the subject of their previous conversation.

Although quite as attentive to Emmy as before, he was courteous rather than cordial or friendly in talking to her; his voice had a cold tone, and the stern, serious expression of his face was no longer relieved by a smile. If anything could distress Emmy still more in her present state of mind, it was this change in Siword; and when he said in the evening, "I have written to Sollingen to have everything ready for our return home," she had not courage to say

a word against it, still less to allow him to perceive the despair which filled her heart at the thought of being back in Holland in two days' time.

The lordship of Sollingen has already come before you so frequently in this narrative, that I feel bound to give a short description of it before I conduct you into the future home of Siword and Emmy. Sollingen is a little simple village, half concealed between wooded hills, and as it is about twenty minutes' walk from a railway station, one might easily pass it without observing any part of it except the old church tower and the castle, which from its elevated position is partially visible behind the hill.

In the winter and spring Sollingen is as good as deserted as regards the *beau monde*; and the four or five families who stay there all through the winter months are kept by positions and 'duties which bind them to the place. But in the summer, the only hotel where lodgings are to be had, "The Sollingen Arms," can hardly satisfy the demand for apartments, although it has been repeatedly added to and enlarged. Yes, and now that the railway has made even this district accessible, houses are beginning to rise up here and there, built as a speculation with a view to letting furnished apartments; and Sollingen is thus gradually acquiring the peculiar aspect of those villages where, in lodging-houses with verandahs and striped blinds, the inhabitants of towns are received for the summer months, and where pale mothers and pale children come to seek in the pure country air new life and new enjoyment of life. And in this respect Sollingen has much in its favor, especially in its fine pure air, in the bathing establishment on the river, which flows scarcely a quarter of a mile from the village, and in the right of walking up to the castle, which stands just above the hotel, as before stated, on a hill luxu-

riously wooded and boasting of a more beautiful situation and lovely view than any other country seat in the whole of Guelderland.

The castle, as mentioned in ancient chronicles, was from time immemorial the abode of the lords of Sollingen. This lordship formerly included an extent of territory which the eye could hardly embrace from the highest tower of the castle, and constituted the inheritance of an old noble family, who certainly could not have imagined to what ruin they would come in our time.

In the preceding century, the family reached the highest summit of their splendor; but later, for three successive generations, the increase of descendants and the consequent division of resources began to undermine its greatness. Then, by degrees, here and there a portion of the property was converted into money, and the lordship was diminished to little more than an ordinary good-sized landed property, and at last matters went so far that the estate, burdened with heavy mortgages, was offered for sale by the last heir, the fortune remaining to him being quite insufficient to enable him to live there in proper style.

For a few years it was in the hands of an Indian sugar-planter, whose riches and love of change rivalled each other, and it was owing to this last-mentioned peculiarity that it had now come into the possession of Siword Hiddema.

But this was not the only alteration which Sollingen had undergone. The old castle with its round turrets, its towers and loopholes, was pulled down fifty years since, and a new house in more modern style erected in its place, more suitable to the modest means which the then owner could afford, and on a much smaller scale than it had been originally; indeed, it could only be called a castle on the strength of the old tradition which had not yet lost its force in Sollingen.

What the house had lost in antiquity and size, it had gained in cheerfulness and brightness of aspect, with its light-gray walls and its wide doors, windows and jalousies; its pillars covered with creepers, supporting a balcony above; below a portico, which, ornamented with rare plants and shrubs, and stands of flowers and hanging baskets, formed a delightfully cool, pretty place in which to sit and enjoy the splendid view of the valley, where the river meandered like a silver ribbon; of the village and church, the railway and high road; of teeming corn-fields and dense woods, bare heaths and rich pastures, stretching far away into the distance, with an indescribable variety of tints and colors.

Great preparations had already been made in the village for the reception of the new lord of Sollingen and his young wife.

A committee had already been formed to regulate the festivities which were to give lustre to their arrival. The schoolmaster had already busied himself in composing a poem, which the school children were to sing on the occasion. It had already been debated in the council of the commune what sum should be granted from the public chest in addition to private subscriptions to meet the expense of the ceremony, when a letter from Wiesbaden, which reached the castle in the early part of September, frustrated the greater part of the plans, by conveying the news that Mr. and Mrs. Hiddema had cut short their tour and were to be expected at Sollingen that same evening.

A shell falling suddenly into the village would not have produced such a commotion and disturbance as this letter, which was transmitted by the housekeeper of the castle to the burgomaster.

They had five hours before them, and in those five hours they did all that was possible.

The alarm-bell, which was sounded, and

which put in motion two fire-engines from the neighboring villages, was the first means resorted to in order to make people aware of something unusual, and thus to spread the news like wild fire through the commune.

It was necessary to abandon a great part of the intended festivities ; but a procession of honor was organized with all speed, a triumphal arch was erected by the peasants at the entrance of the village, with the words "Be welcome" on it, and flags were hoisted on the tower, the council-house, and on any private houses which happened to possess them.

There had not been such a hurry and bustle in the village for ages : such running and flying about had very seldom been seen, and seldom, alas ! such streams of rain as deluged Sollingen on that memorable September day.

From early in the morning till late in the evening the sky continued to be gray and lowering, and showed little sympathy with the Sollingites, who looked up imploringly to heaven.

The five-and twenty notables who made up the procession of honor might be seen literally shining and dripping with rain. Three-fourths of them were peasants' sons, and were ranged round the close carriage which stood ready at the station to receive the honored personages of the occasion.

A melancholy ghost of a festivity it was indeed, that solemn entry of Siword and Emmy ; the continuous rain seemed to spoil everything. The orange ribbons with which the peasants' hats and their horses were adorned, and the bunches of flowers on the horses' tails, were all discolored and wet, and the individuals who undertook the duty of forming an escort sneaked along under their dripping umbrellas, evidently afraid of spoiling their best clothes, which they felt bound to wear, and they could hardly have been in a frame of mind suited to this festive occasion.

Finally, the wind seemed to think that the rain could not do enough to destroy everything, and it was in a regular hurricane that Siword and Emmy were complimented by the burgomaster, whose address lost much of the dignity that distinguished it owing to the howling of the wind and the pelting rain, which hardly permitted him to be intelligible.

In a few words Siword thanked him for the honor paid to them ; he then hastened with his wife to the carriage, where Seyna and her governess were seated, and drove at a quick pace up the approach to the castle.

An hour later the evening closed in, and all traces of the festivity had vanished.

The castle was enveloped in pitch darkness.

The wind whistled in the chimneys, howled in the corners, and drove against the windows, on which the rain clattered during the whole of the first night which Siword and Emmy passed at their own house.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE INTERVIEW AT THE "SOLLINGEN ARMS."

MUST I go back for a fortnight, worthy reader, in order to tell you what has happened ?

Is Emmy's behavior as inexplicable to you as it was to her husband ?

I could hardly succeed, even if I wished, in throwing a veil of mystery over this important event in the life of Emmy Welters.

Mystery is not indeed part of my plan, and if I have hesitated for a moment before telling it to you, it is simply from the fear lest my pen should prove unequal to describe that hour in Emmy's life, when, coming into her room after leaving the wedding breakfast, she found on her table three letters which had been broken open, and which at the first glance she recognized as letters from Bruno Eversberg.

In that fearful moment when the scream which was heard by the party at breakfast below escaped from her lips, in that moment she comprehended everything with supernatural clearness. To her that moment was the revelation of all that was connected with the letters.

Everything lay clearly and distinctly delineated before her mind's eye.

She saw the letters, how they were written in America by her beloved friend. She saw them arrive in Dilburg, and she saw them opened and kept back by William de Graaff, first for the furtherance of his private aims and wishes, and later to use them as an instrument for his dastardly revenge.

"When the day comes in which you will find yourself so wretched and miserable that no one in the world can possibly help you, think of this hour!"

The time had come, and William's words sounded in her ears while she stood there before the letters motionless and petrified, her hands pressed against her heart, that was beating violently, and struggling with the loss of consciousness which she felt to be threatening to overpower her.

"Nothing! no, nothing! is the matter; I am only busy dressing." These mechanical words, uttered in a hoarse voice, were in answer to the anxious questions of Siword and Elizabeth; they sounded to Emmy herself as if some other person had spoken them, and yet they called her back to the terrible reality.

It was Siword who was at the door: it was her husband, whom a few hours before she had promised to be true to and to love, to whom from this day she was to belong body and soul!

A shudder passed through her limbs; with trembling fingers she took up Bruno's letters.

She tried to read them but she could not.

The written characters danced before her eyes; the lines melted into each other, and the words which she read mechanically did not reach her understanding.

She sank down on the ground, pressing the letters to her breast, with her teeth chattering, and gasping for breath.

"Yes! yes!" she could with difficulty utter in answer to Siword, on his warning her that he was going to dress for the journey, and asking whether she would be ready when he came back.

A moment longer she remained in the same position, with her forehead pressed against the floor.

She then started up.

Her usual powers of thought returned.

Why that fearful emotion at the sight of Bruno's letters? What difference could they make in her position?

She was married and he was married. . . . But *was* he married? She hardly dared to entertain the thought—a thought which filled her with inexpressible agony.

The solution of the riddle was now in her hands.

She went to the washhand-stand, filled a large glass of water, and drank it off in one draught.

As she looked up she saw herself reflected in the looking-glass like a spectre in full bridal dress.

In an instant she tore the bridal wreath from her head, undid her white silk dress and let it slip down to the ground.

Then she again took up the letters.

One by one she read the address on each:

Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Miss Welters,

Dilburg,

in the well-known handwriting, the character of which was inscribed ineffaceably on her memory.

She was now calm, unnaturally calm, so calm, as to be able to look at the dates,

and to understand the order in which they were to be read.

The latest date made her head swim again for a moment :

"August 2, 186—." The letter was, therefore, written this very month ! Again she conquered her emotion, and began to read.

The first letter she read was fully two years and a half old, and was an answer to her letter about his mother's death.

However much gratitude, cordiality, and love was perceptible in every line, yet there was not a single word which passed the limit Emmy had enjoined, and yet the most superficial reader could not but perceive that the feeling which had penned this letter had nothing in common with simple friendship.

"But your letter fills me most of all with gratitude, dear Emmy !" wrote Bruno ; "I know that you love my mother, and that the words of comfort which you address to me come from your heart. They shine on me as a friendly ray of light from my native country, which is veiled from me in darkness, and I have read them again and again till I almost know them by heart."

The rest of the letter turned principally on the mother he had lost and so deeply mourned ; just at the end he mentioned one or two matters relating to his personal interests, the prospects opening to him and the success they promised.

It closed thus :

"I do not know whether you will be allowed to write to me once again, but even if you are unable to do so I feel a conviction that I live in your recollection as you do in mine. This thought will comfort and strengthen me in every hour of difficulty, and give me power and courage to persevere in the work which will ensure my future."

The next letter was dated a whole year later, and was written in an excited strain.

It told of the unexpected prosperity of

his affairs. The agricultural undertaking in which he was engaged had flourished and extended itself in a way which had surpassed his highest expectations, while Mr. Siddons had acted the part of a true friend by advancing him capital ; so that Bruno, instead of being a simple manager, had become a partner in the undertaking, and the interests of others, which he had hitherto only superintended, had thus become his own.

"Once more I feel that I am young," he wrote ; "that the recollection of the sorrowful past will be effaced by a happy future."

And the last letter, written in the current month, was in these terms :

"Emmy, my darling, all further secrecy is, Heaven be praised, unnecessary. Within a month I shall be with you, and no power on earth shall hinder me from making you my own.

"Your father will not stand in the way of our happiness ; of that I am sure. If it is not too difficult, prepare him now for what I am coming to ask him.

"If you can and may, write a few lines to me at the *poste restante*, Rotterdam, that I may rely on your promise, and that I may still call myself

"Your BRUNO."

She read it all.

She read to the very end.

She did not scream, she did not give utterance to her pain and despair ; she sat dumb and motionless, while no feeling except that of infinite sorrow and woe pierced her heart with hopeless anguish.

In her desperate agony the thought suddenly flashed upon her that the month of which Bruno's letter spoke was almost over, and that he whom she dared not, could not meet, might stand before her eyes at any moment.

In feverish haste she began to put on her travelling dress ; she tried to force herself

to control her thoughts, at least so far as to collect her things for her departure.

"Yes, immediately!"

Siword had again knocked, and called out to her that it was time to be going away.

Away from here: yes, that was what she desired above all things.

Away from here, out of reach of Bruno's reproachful words and looks.

To meet her irrevocable lot; but away from here, where hate and revenge might gloat upon her misery.

She put the letters carefully in her pocket.

Then she opened the door.

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This fearful hour in Emmy's life, as I have sketched it, is but a faint impression of the reality; but I cannot represent it more fully.

There are passages in human life which no pen is able to describe.

It is but a weak sketch that I can lay before me; but in your own heart and imagination it must receive its form and color. In your own mind you must work out what it wants in light and shadow and sharpness of outline.

Language is poor when it attempts to express every degree of pain which may torture the human heart.

And if you have thought of Emmy in that hour, think of her also in the first days of her marriage.

Think of her with her husband at her side, and yet with her passionate love for Bruno in her heart.

Think of her with the painful knowledge of Bruno's speedy arrival in Dilburg, and the appearance of faithlessness which in his eyes must rest upon her.

Think of her doubting the justice of Providence, who could have permitted an action so cowardly and hateful as that of William de Graaff.

Think of her in the uninterrupted pre-

sence of Siword, whose searching looks she continually saw resting upon her; Siword, whom she must honor and love for the sake of the noble qualities which she had learnt to appreciate in him, and on whom she knew she inflicted disappointment by her inexplicable behavior, for which nothing before her marriage had prepared him.

Think of her when the half-explanation between them had taken place, when the shadow of coldness and distrust had come over him, and a chasm had opened between them which would widen every succeeding day if she did not speak that word which alone could close it.

Could she speak that word?

Could she say to Siword, "I have become your wife owing to a misunderstanding. There exists one who is a thousand times dearer to me than yourself—one for whose happiness I would sacrifice my life and my salvation; with whom I would choose poverty and shame rather than a life with you full of enjoyment?"

No; she could not resolve to say that, and she did not say it.

She bore his coldness with so much else that she had to bear, because she must bear it. She followed Siword to Sollingen because she must follow him; and, from the moment she reached Holland, in constant terror, thinking that she saw or should see Bruno, and yet with an unaccountable mixture of fear and hope.

Hope?

Yes, however unwillingly she returned to Holland, for fear of a meeting with Bruno, it sometimes seemed to her impossible that she could continue to live if no opportunity should arise of having an explanation with him; if she could not tell him face to face how all things had combined to make her believe him untrue to her; how she was the victim of treachery and deception; and that even Siword, whom she knew to be incapable of an untruth, had spread an

obviously erroneous report of Bruno's marriage.

She was not selfish in her grief.

Her sorrow was far less for herself than for Bruno's sufferings, which came before her mind incessantly.

Day and night she lost herself in conjectures about him.

When would the first doubt of her arise in him?

Who would speak the word which would pierce his heart like a dagger?

Would his grief be locked up in his own breast, or would he give expression to his sorrow and seek comfort?

But not alone Bruno; Siword's feelings also filled her with compassion.

The disappointment which he had so little deserved from her she took deeply to heart.

She understood this disappointment in its fullest extent when he had brought her into her home at Sollingen, which had been prepared for her reception with such care and forethought. She felt keenly what a different thing the arrival at home would have been had she not found those letters from Bruno, or if he had been actually married, as she thought he was when she gave her hand to Siword.

In storm and rain, at the close of the evening, they arrived at Sollingen. Siword helped her carefully out of the carriage, and, leaning on his arm, they walked together through the beautifully-furnished suite of rooms which were lighted up in honor of their arrival.

He explained all the arrangements of the house, he showed her all the alterations which he had made, but all in the cold tone he had adopted, and with the sombre shade that had come over his face since the conversation at Wiesbaden had taken place between them.

No cordial word of welcome came from his lips, and with eyes dimmed with tears, and a choking in her throat which impeded

every word, Emmy walked by his side through the house. When they came at last to the little boudoir prepared for Emmy's special use adjoining the bed-room, she saw in its arrangement such generous expense, such good taste, in its silk hangings, its white and gold paper, the soft couch, the small, elegant writing-table, with her favorite authors beautifully bound lying upon it, and she could not but recognize Siword's careful love in a hundred little trifles which were evident at the first glance; she was no longer mistress of herself, and while the tears started from her eyes, she laid her hand on her husband's shoulder, and said in a whisper—

"Siword, say a word of welcome to me, that it may make it possible for me to accept all these proofs of your goodness and love, which I feel I so little deserve."

But Siword did not speak that word.

Disengaging himself from her, he said, coldly—

"I will bid you welcome, Emmy, when that perfect confidence shall exist between us which is the first security of a happy united life, when in reality, and not only in appearance, you come home to Sollingen!"

At these cold, repulsive words, Emmy lost all self-command.

Sinking into a chair, and covering her face with her hands, she burst into tears.

When she looked up again, Siword had left the room, and during the whole of the rest of the evening she saw no more of him. She sat there alone, surrounded by all these new and beautiful things, but listening to the howling of the wind and the clatter of the rain as an accompaniment to her sorrowful, despairing thoughts.

And yet to be alone was in a certain sense a relief which she doubly valued, after the weeks of uninterrupted companionship with Siword. There was some comfort in the feeling of being unobserved,

and free to weep forth her sorrow till the source of her tears should be dried up.

She did not go to bed, or undress, but, turning down the lamp, she went to lie down on the sofa, in order to give free scope to her thoughts. The calm repose, after she had wept out the long-smothered sorrow, did her much good.

The conviction that her behavior to her husband, such as it had hitherto been, ought not to go on much longer, that for his sake it could not continue so, was confirmed in her mind by the calm and thoughtful retrospect of it, which until now she had been unable to enter upon.

It could not—it must not be continued. She was the wife of Siword, and he must not be sacrificed to the mistake she had made in marrying him. She had accepted his hand of her own free will and choice, the hand which might be considered by any woman as a treasure to be coveted, and she ought not to endure that the alienation which had come between them should continue.

Could she by no other means overcome that alienation, except by a complete confession, such as Siword seemed to require, well, then she would appeal to his goodness and nobleness to stand by her in the difficult task which duty demanded of her.

But this could not happen till she had come to an explanation with Bruno.

The desire for action which during all these weeks of anxiety had slumbered in her, now woke up with double force.

To attempt to see Bruno was quite out of the question ; but to ascertain his address, to write all she must say to him before she could find rest, this she could and would do.

When she should have his answer in her hands, she would force herself, not indeed to forget him—that was impossible—but to drive back his image into the remotest corner of her heart ; her duty must then come into the foreground, and it must be her

main endeavor to be to Siword and Seyna what before God she had promised to be.

Strengthened by these good resolutions, Emmy started up from her couch.

In the middle of the night, in the very same hour that her decision had become ripe, she wrote to Elizabeth.

Not in detail, but in broad features, such as were necessary to make her understand, she took Elizabeth into her confidence, and commissioned her to ascertain Bruno's address as soon as he should arrive in Dilburg, under the condition of the strictest secrecy, even as regarded Lieutenant Smit, and with the promise of further explanations on the first opportunity of meeting her.

When this letter was written and sealed, for the first time a calmness came over Emmy since the day she had found Bruno's letters ; for the first time she had a quiet sleep, which revived and strengthened her, and enabled her to meet her husband with the necessary composure in the breakfast-room ; to let him introduce her to the housekeeper and the other servants, and to place her in her position as his wife, without giving rise by her behavior to any supposition that anything embarrassed the relations between herself and Siword.

As if by a tacit agreement, Siword on his part seemed also anxious to keep up appearances before the household, but he seemed to make it his study never for a moment to be alone with his wife, and in making her acquainted with Solingen and its environs, to which their walks and drives for the first few days were devoted, it was evidently with this object that Seyna and the governess were also of the party.

The fourth day after their arrival at Solingen was a Sunday.

Early in the morning, at intervals of half an hour, the church bell sounded from the village, and Emmy prepared herself to accompany Siword to church, according to his request. Thus far no answer had

reached her from Elizabeth, and while dressing she was constantly on the look-out to see the old postman coming with the early post letters. And when he had arrived she listened anxiously, waiting to know whether Siword would send up a letter to her. A quarter of an hour elapsed without this happening, and she again gave up her hope for the day.

That it is possible to control to a certain extent even the most painful thoughts had been made clear to Emmy during the last few days, and now she again felt equal to maintain an appearance of calmness, notwithstanding her continued uncertainty as to Bruno.

I say an appearance of calmness, and whatever service that appearance rendered her with regard to Siword and those about her, more than an appearance it was not; for in her inmost mind there was still the same struggle, the same despairing sorrow, which made itself felt with still greater force whenever she had suppressed it for a moment, but now, when the letter so eagerly expected did not arrive, the fear lest William de Graaff should make some evil use of this correspondence also, and her feeling of helplessness against him, whom she hated as she never before knew that she could hate any one, brought bitter tears to her eyes, and their traces had scarcely disappeared when she heard the carriage which was to take Siword and herself to church drive up to the door.

Emmy cast a sorrowful look out of the window at the well-appointed carriage and handsome brown horses, and at the neat new liveries of the coachman and servant, all of which might have excited the pardonable pride of a new possessor; but in Emmy's peculiar position all the new appearance of wealth and luxury to which she had not been accustomed caused her an oppression and uncomfortable feeling which she could not shake off.

The impossibility of enjoying it and of

being thankful for it came before her mind as a debt towards Siword, a debt which she could never repay, and doubly so as she knew what a great pleasure he had anticipated in surrounding the wife of his choice with the abundant enjoyments, which his large means enabled him to provide.

Sollingen possessed a small but neat village church. The pretty seraphine organ, the pleasant tones of which greeted Siword and Emmy as they entered, was a present to the church from the new lord of Sollingen on the occasion of his marriage, and it toned down in some degree the unbridled singing of the peasants, who were accustomed, each after his own fashion, and regardless of time or tune, to raise their voices in hymns to heaven. This had probably suggested to Siword the first idea of making the present.

The quietness of the village church, which in this respect is so preferable to a church in a town, where the solemn feeling that prepares one for worship is lost in crowd and pressure, made an agreeable impression on Emmy. She could not recollect that she had ever prayed or sung so entirely with her whole heart, or had ever listened with such devotion to a sermon as to that of the old minister, with his snow-white hair, who stood there with his exhortations and warnings in the midst of his flock as if they were his children.

When in the final petition he introduced a prayer for her and her husband—a prayer for their happiness and for peace in their dwelling and in their hearts—a strong emotion was awakened in her, and giving way to an impulse which overpowered all other thoughts and sensations, she sought the hand of her husband. And he did not refuse it.

She felt her hand held with a firm grasp till the prayer was ended. A short hymn followed, and Emmy left the church on the arm of her husband, strengthened and more calm than when she entered it.

The uncomfortable consciousness that people were staring at her made her cast down her eyes, and only as she reached the carriage she looked round to respond to the greetings of the bystanders.

At the same instant Siword suddenly felt his arm, upon which Emmy's hand rested, clutched with a convulsive grasp. A half-smothered cry escaped her lips, and leaning heavily against him in her terror, she was carried rather than walked, and was helped into the carriage by Siword in an almost unconscious condition.

When she was seated in it and had sunk back on the cushions, Siword took advantage of the moment that elapsed before the carriage set off to look round in order to discover the cause of her alarm.

Only strange faces were staring at him, but in that short instant he was struck by the appearance of a young man of fair complexion, who, with hollow, bewildered eyes, looked into the carriage, and then quickly disappeared out of sight.

Siword then again turned his attention to Emmy, who, trembling with terror, was evidently making vain efforts to control herself, whilst every particle of color had deserted her cheeks.

In a few minutes the carriage drove up to the door of the castle, and without saying a word Siword helped his wife into the house.

Placing her trembling hand on his arm, he led her up-stairs and into her room, where he took off her hat and shawl as if she were a sick child, and made her lie down on the sofa.

He then left the room for a moment and returned with a glass of water.

Emmy willingly allowed him to help her; without speaking, but trembling and with her teeth chattering, she tried to drink the water, but could not succeed, and he took it away; then she started up from her seat, crying out in a wild and despairing tone—

"Siword, I have seen him! I have seen him!" and bursting into violent sobs, she fell on her knees and buried her face in the cushions of the sofa.

Without in the least understanding what she meant, Siword seemed to conjecture that the long-expected confession would soon follow. Visibly affected and overcome by the signs of deep pain which he witnessed in her, he sat down and took Emmy gently on his knee.

In silence he let her sob upon his breast, only now and then stroking her hair and patiently waiting till her nervousness was so far composed that she was able to speak. Then he said in a low and tender tone—

"Tell me all now, Emmy; whom have you seen who can affect you thus?"

She still needed a few moments before she could answer him; then she said, hiding her face on his shoulder—

"Bruno Eversberg. O Siword! Siword! it is too terrible."

Her sobs and cries began afresh, and Siword, turning pale at the mention of this name, although he could not attach any particular meaning to it, again spoke to her—

"Emmy, do your best to be calm, and let there be at last an explanation between us; tell me without scruple what relations have existed or still exist between you and this Bruno Eversberg, that his appearance should so upset you."

Then she told him all.

At first slowly and with hesitation, but faster and calmer as her confession proceeded.

She told him of her love for Bruno, of her secret engagement, of their separation; of the non-receipt of his letters, detained by William de Graaff; of the confirmation of her doubts by Siword's own announcement of Bruno's marriage, and of the finding of the letters on her wedding-day. . . .

He did not interrupt her. He let her tell him all, but his countenance was pale and rigid, and he held his teeth fast set, as if a struggle was going on within him, to which he did not venture to give the smallest expression.

When Emmy had finished, he gently released her from his arms and made her sit by him.

He then got up and walked up and down the room two or three times in silence, till he came and stood before her, and laid his hand upon her head, and said gently, whilst he lifted up her tearful face towards him—

"Poor child! you should have let me into your confidence sooner. Try now to be calm and to take some rest."

He brought a pillow out of the bedroom, helped her to take a comfortable, resting position, drew the curtains so as to temper the bright daylight, sprinkled her forehead and cheeks with *eau-de-Cologne*, and sat by her on a chair close to the sofa, with one of her cold, trembling hands between his.

When at last she seemed to have become calm, he let go her hand, and, stepping gently and cautiously, so as not to disturb her, he left the room.

Half an hour afterwards Siword went out of the castle, and, going down the hill, bent his steps towards the "Sollingen Arms." It was one of those warm sunny September days, with the fresh bracing air which distinguish autumn.

The height of the season was over for Sollingen. Most of the visitors of the hotel had gone to their homes, and the few families still remaining there were on the point of leaving, and were enjoying the autumn afternoon, drinking their coffee in the broad verandah which extended along the front of the house.

Siword walked slowly along the verandah, and as he bowed to the visitors he cast a long, searching glance at them, without,

however, seeming to find the object of his search.

After going round the house, he went in at the back door and talked a little to the landlord, who was smoking a pipe in his shirt-sleeves, and enjoying a pleasant Sunday holiday. Siword asked him—

"Is any one lodging here of the name of Eversberg?"

The landlord considered for a moment, while to assist the clearness of his head he scratched it with the handle of his pipe.

"Perhaps, sir, you mean the young man who has the great front room up-stairs. He came the day before yesterday, and I think there is the letter E.—B. E, if I don't mistake—upon his trunk; but his name I don't know. He takes his meals up-stairs, but they mostly come down untouched. My wife thinks he is ill. Yesterday I saw him go towards the castle, where he walked for hours. This morning he has been out for half an hour, but when he came home he looked so terribly ill, that my wife sent me up-stairs to see whether anything was the matter with him. He seems, however, to be an irritable sort of gentleman, astonishingly irritable; he hardly gave me an answer."

"Is he a young man with light hair?" asked Siword.

"Yes, sir. Might he be an acquaintance of yours, sir?"

Siword seemed to think it unnecessary to reply; at least he only answered by a question—

"What is the number of his room?"

"No. 9."

Taking a visiting card from his pocket-book, Siword called to a waiter who was passing, and desired him to take the card to the gentleman in No. 9, and to ask if the gentleman could speak to him for a moment.

The waiter came back in a few minutes, somewhat put out, and said—

"The gentleman in No. 9 read the card,

tore it up, and refused to see Mr. Hiddema."

Siword, however, was not the man to be put off by such a message. He frowned when the waiter brought this message, but the next moment he sent him up-stairs again with another card, on which he had written in pencil—

"A matter of the greatest importance obliges me to press for an interview. I will meet you here for that purpose at any hour you will fix."

This time the waiter did not come back so speedily.

When he did come, it was to take Siword up-stairs and to open the door of No. 9.

Siword entered the room without hesitation. The sunlight came in unhindered through the two windows at the front of the house, and shone on the great round table in the middle of the room, where the coffee, as well as the second breakfast, stood ready, but quite untouched.

By the side-window, which had a view of the castle, and with a great telescope lying on a smaller table before him, sat the occupant of the room. His back was towards the door, and he remained sitting in the same position till his visitor was already in the room, and the waiter had shut the door after him.

He could not but have observed Siword's entrance. But Siword did not permit himself to be driven from the field by this conduct; and after pausing some moments he advanced a few steps into the middle of the room, waiting composedly till the stranger should be pleased to take notice of his presence.

When the stranger did so, the same pale, bewildered face which Siword had observed an hour before in the churchyard was now turned upon him, but with an altered expression, for his eyes now sparkled with wrath.

The two men stood opposite each other.

Bruno Eversberg with one hand leaning on the table, and half bending over it with trembling, colorless lips, which seemed to prevent him from speaking.

Siword Hiddema, standing straight upright, with a calm, earnest face, that showed no trace of the feelings which must have agitated him during this interview.

"Have I the pleasure of meeting Mr. Eversberg?"

"That pleasure is all on your side, Mr. Hiddema," answered Bruno, with a strange, harsh voice. "May I ask by what right you have intruded a visit upon me, which, to say the least of it, is in the highest degree disagreeable?"

The tone, even more than the words, seemed intended to be affronting, but it made no visible alteration in Siword's expression of countenance. Calmly and coolly, as if he had met with the most courteous reception, he answered—"With the right that every one has who comes with the best intentions for others, and not for his own interests."

"May I then be permitted to know in whose interest you do come?" resumed Bruno, unconsciously rendered calmer by the calmness of his visitor.

"In your own interest, Mr. Eversberg, and in the interest of one who is dear to both of us—in the interest of Emmy."

Now Bruno burst out.

Stamping on the floor, he cried out in a loud, angry tone, "Do not utter her name in my presence, or I shall not be able to prevent myself from throwing you out of the window."

He advanced towards Siword, but even in that instant of boisterous passion he felt the influence of Siword's imperturbable calmness.

Siword, however, did not yield a step.

"Young man," said he, "I shall pronounce the name of my wife as often and wherever it pleases me to do so, and neither you nor any one else shall hinder me."

Bruno involuntarily yielded to the calm, firm tone of these words.

"Yes, yes; you are right," he said, with a painful, shrill laugh; "you have bought her with your name and your riches, and you have a right to lord it over me in possessing her."

"I know not what means you have used to win her; I know not with what allurements you have enticed her; but I do not envy you. Her heart can have had nothing to do with the bargain which has been made, for her heart belongs to me."

"Why you have forced your presence upon me I do not know, and I do not wish to know. You and I have nothing to do with each other; you and I have nothing in common; but I will tell you why I have come here."

"I have come to hear from her own lips that her heart has been faithful to me; I have come to liberate her from the slavery of a marriage which she cannot have entered into of her own free choice, and to take her away with me in spite of everything."

"I shall not go from here, unless she herself bids me to go; and in that case—then—then only shall I call her to account for the happiness of my life which she has destroyed; and the ring which she gave me as the pledge of her love, I will then throw at her feet and stamp upon it."

"Take care of your young wife, Mr. Hiddema! take care of her as the apple of your eye, for I go not from here till I have spoken to her. Day and night I will lurk near your house—days, weeks, months, years if necessary—but go from here I will not till I have attained my object!"

"That you will not do, Mr. Eversberg."

"And who shall hinder me?"

"Your own feelings of honor and compassion, when you can command yourself sufficiently to give me an opportunity of saying that which I came here to say to you."

"Mr. Eversberg, the violent language

which you make use of towards me is doubly unsuitable, for I come as a friend and not as an enemy. The threat you have uttered can have no power, for it is my intention myself to bring you to Emmy. You shall reach her not by secretly lurking in a manner quite unworthy of yourself and of her, but openly and honorably, with my knowledge and with my approval. I will now take the liberty of sitting down for a moment while I tell you what it is fit you should know beforehand."

Bruno's passion had now entirely given way.

Siword's calmness and dignified address made an impression upon him which was stronger than his passion.

When his visitor sat down, he also went back silently to the chair where he had been sitting when Siword entered. With an expression of intense suspense on his face he looked at Siword, while he pushed back his hair from his forehead with a movement peculiar to himself.

"Mr. Eversberg," said Siword, "I must begin by telling you that it is only within this very hour that it has come to my knowledge that any relation existed between my wife and yourself."

"Not that she concealed it from me, but I myself unwittingly kept back her confession when, before our marriage, she wished to make it."

"Let me further tell you that all your letters to her were withheld in a rascally manner by William de Graaff, and I myself brought to Dilburg the news of your marriage in America."

"That was a lie!" exclaimed Bruno, warmly.

"It was a misunderstanding, at all events, Mr. Eversberg; but I am lucky enough to be able to inform you who it was who reported it to me. Do you recollect a naval officer meeting you with a lady on your arm at the opera, and wishing you joy as he passed?"

"De Bruin? Good Heavens! Did he mean that by his congratulations, which I could not understand at the time?"

"Yes; he was under the impression that the lady on your arm was your young wife, and the accidental mention of the circumstance to me, just as I was going to Dilburg, gave occasion to Emmy to think that you had forgotten her."

"Consider, moreover, that owing to the cessation of your promised letters, she had not heard from you for years, that her position in the house of her step-mother after her father's death was far from enviable, and, taking one thing with another, you must excuse her for not finding any difficulty on your account in accepting my proposal."

"And my letters . . . ?" asked Bruno, half maddened by the unexpected discoveries, of which at the first moment, he hardly comprehended the whole sensè.

"Your letters were placed in her room by William de Graaff in the very hour that our marriage was celebrated."

"The God-forgetting villain!" cried Bruno; "but he shall not escape punishment."

"Bruno Eversberg," interrupted Siword, in a solemn tone, "you said just now that there could be nothing in common between us; but, at all events, *one* common interest we have—we both have to watch over Emmy's good name, her peace, and her happiness."

"Whatever the revenge may be that you intend to take of William de Graaff, let it not be such as will drag her name before the public."

"I give you my sacred assurance that had I known these things even one hour before my marriage, however difficult it might have been for me, I would have given up Emmy to you without a moment's hesitation."

"Now it is too late for me to make such a sacrifice, and I therefore ask it of you."

That she loves you more than me there is no doubt; and, therefore, I can only say that both you and I are the victims of the cowardly action of William de Graaff.

"But what is done cannot be undone."

"It is true that, by consenting to a divorce, I might give back to Emmy her freedom; but, under these circumstances, years must pass before she could become your wife—years in which, without support and without protection, she would be thrown upon the world with the slur upon her which a divorced wife cannot get rid of."

"To this I will not expose her, neither will you if she is as dear to you as I believe."

"The only thing we can do is all three of us to take up our share of the cross which each of us has to bear with courage and submission; but you and I must both work together not to make Emmy's share heavier than need be, yes, and as far as possible to lighten it for her. This is the common interest which must exist between us, Eversberg; to this we must bind ourselves, and give our hands to each other over that cleft of enmity which the natural feelings of both our hearts has excited between us."

Bruno's head had sunk down upon his breast at the solemn words of Siword, whose countenance and voice expressed deep-felt emotion such as he seldom betrayed.

At his last words he put out his hand to Bruno, who lifted up his head; but emotion equally prevented him from giving an immediate answer; but pressing cordially Siword's proffered hand, he at length whispered in a hoarse and toneless voice—

"Yes, that I will, so help me God Almighty."

Siword now got up from his chair, and, silently walking up and down the room, gave Bruno an opportunity of recovering from his agitation.

When the unbroken silence had lasted for a time, Siword said—

"Will you come with me to Emmy, to take leave of her?"

Bruno made no answer, but, starting up from his seat, took his hat, and the two men walked together in silence to the castle.

CHAPTER XXIII.

GOOD-BYE FOR EVER.

"EMMY, are you asleep?"

"No, Siword."

He had come carefully into the half-darkened room, and the absolutely motionless condition in which he found his wife gave rise to this question.

"Are you calm enough, Emmy, to listen now to what I have to say to you?"

"Yes, yes."

She rose up, turning pale even before he spoke, and pressing her hands against her beating temples.

Before speaking Siword began to draw up the curtains, to put in their proper places the chairs which had been drawn forward here and there, and to take away the pillow he had brought for her out of the bedroom.

Then he sat down by her for a moment, and in the same gentle, tender tone which he had adopted since her confession, said—

"Child! I have been with Bruno Eversberg. I found him at the 'Sollingen Arms,' where he is staying, and I have given him all necessary explanations as to the circumstances which led to your marriage with me."

"O Siword! Siword! why are you so good to me? How can I be grateful enough? Now I can bear everything. Now Bruno will not think ill of me. Can he forgive me? Has he not sent any message?"

These eager questions seemed to hinder Siword a little. He stood up and only said—

"What he has to say to you he shall say himself, Emmy. He is down-stairs, and is waiting there till I bring him to you."

The great alarm and surprise which these words created made her start up, but speechless with emotion, she sank down again the next moment on the sofa.

She felt rather than saw that Siword had left the room.

She heard footsteps coming up-stairs—footsteps at the door of the room.

She dared not look up. She hid her face in her hands.

The first thing she was conscious of was the entrance of some one into the room, whilst some one else outside the door withdrew.

A moment later Bruno Eversberg knelt before her, his face hidden in her lap, whilst their united sobs were the only sound that broke the silence of the room. . .

"Bruno! Bruno! that we should meet again thus," whispered Emmy.

But he could not speak; his arms held her fast, and broken, uninterrupted sobs came forth from his breast.

Yet he was the first of the two to come to his senses. Disengaging himself from Emmy, he slowly got up.

"Can you forgive me, Bruno, that I doubted you? Oh! I ought to have known that you could not be faithless to me, even had I every proof to the contrary!"

She sobbed aloud, and hid her face in her hands; but Bruno had now so far recovered himself that he was able to speak.

"Do not say so, Emmy! My heart acquitted you of any wrong even when I was ignorant of the circumstances which led to your marriage. All things worked together to mislead you and to separate us. We have been the victims of a scoundrel, but without any fault of our own. And better so, ten times better so, than if it had been as you must have thought."

He took her hands from her face, and gazed at her with a long passionate look,

as if he would engrave every feature of her dear face on his mind.

She also now forced herself to be composed.

He sat down by her on the sofa, and taking the ring of Emmy's mother from his finger, gave it to her in silence.

She dared not give him back that ring, and he dared not ask for it. Neither of them said a word more.

Hand in hand, overcome by the most painful feelings, they sat in silence for a while, by each other, till Bruno suddenly got up, and, bending over her, said—

"Emmy, dearest, we must part—and worse than the first time—for ever! God seems to will it so. Farewell!"

Half unconscious, Emmy sank back.

As if in a dream, she felt a long, ardent kiss impressed on her lips—as the whisper-breath of a sultry evening wind there sounded in her ears, through the mist of her unconsciousness, the words, "Good-bye, Emmy! Good-bye, my darling! Good-bye for ever!"

When she again came to her senses, she was alone.

Bruno Eversberg had left her, and as the echo of a passing bell, there sounded in her heart the words *for ever!* . . .

The whole of the rest of the day Emmy remained shut up in her room.

It was impossible for her to see any one, even Siword. Alone with God, she went through the fearful struggle—the struggle of her love for Bruno with her duty to her husband.

On that struggle I will not enter into further details.

The difficult hours in Emmy's life which I have already narrated have been so many, that I might be tedious, and I should probably weary you, were I to describe the details of this day, with all the sensations and emotions which had chosen Emmy's heart for their battle-field.

It is enough for me to say that it was a

severe struggle, to which the whole of a long day was dedicated—a struggle which so wearied out her body and mind, that when she went to rest in the evening, she, from mere exhaustion and fatigue, fell into a sound sleep, which continued during the whole night.

When she awoke it was with the consciousness that some one had been in her room, and had awakened her with a kiss on her forehead.

She lay still for a moment, but then, coming to herself and sitting up, she heard the sound of a carriage driving away from the castle. At the same moment her eyes fell on a letter which was placed on a chair near the bed.

Opening it hastily, she found it was from her husband, and was as follows:—

"It is better for us both that we should part from each other for a short time. I am going to Scotland, where I have a share in a factory, and where my presence is required. I cannot exactly say when I shall return, as that depends on various circumstances. Act in my absence in all things as you may think fit. If you find an adviser necessary in matters relating to Sollingen, apply to my steward, who is fully acquainted with all my wishes and intentions.

"All that in this world is of any value to me I leave in your hands and under your protection—my wife, my child, my name, and my house—and I know that I need not add any instructions. Farewell.

"SIWORD HIDDEMA."

On the same morning that Siword set out on his journey, and that Emmy read the letter he had left for her, a young man walked into Dilburg through one of the gates. It was Bruno Eversberg. He had left Sollingen at daybreak, and it was still early in the morning when he reached Dilburg.

His steps were directed along the well-known road to the iron foundry. With an inexpressible "heimweh" he wandered round the dark building which had been the scene of all the joyous, happy memories of his youth.

He gazed at the house ; he looked over the palings into the garden, where every tree and every plant seemed to greet him as an old friend. When he came to the front door, the milkman was just ringing the bell.

The familiar sound was the last drop which made his cup overflow. He felt unable any longer to control his feelings, and he fled from the spot to which his thoughts during the last few years had so often wandered.

Pressing his hat deep over his eyes, in order not to be recognized by the few persons who were already in the street, he hastened to the churchyard to the grave of his parents.

There he fell on his knees ; there he pressed his burning eyes and throbbing temples against the cold tombstones ; there he was overcome by the wild despair which filled his heart to bursting.

In that bitter hour the words of his father fell upon his ear : "The sins of the fathers are visited on the children," and he shuddered.

He felt that these words were verified in himself as they probably never had been in any one else before—he who was once so happy and hopeful, and now as if forsaken by God and the world—and it seemed to him, as it does once to each of us in a like hour of despair, that he had done for ever with all happiness and all joy.

He stayed a long time in the church-yard.

As on the day before he had tried to engrave on his mind Emmy's features, so now he fixed in his recollection all the surroundings of the last resting-place of his parents. Now and then he looked at

his watch, as if he were waiting for a particular time. When he had done this for about the tenth time, he rose up and went away with hasty steps. Making a long detour outside the walls in order to avoid the town, where he did not wish to be recognized, he reached the street where the post-office was situated.

The morning post seemed to have just arrived ; he saw the postmen, with the letters in their hands, come out of the door, and immediately disperse themselves in different directions, whilst the clerk speedily followed them to get his breakfast at home.

A faint smile of satisfaction passed over Bruno's countenance.

He had been anxious to hit upon this particular moment, and he was not disappointed ; for when he went into the office he found William de Graaff alone.

Leaning over his desk, busy making entries in a ledger, William did not immediately look up when he heard some one come in ; but the moment he raised his eyes on his visitor and recognized him, he sprang up from his stool, and could not control the agitation and alarm which drove every particle of color from his ordinarily pale face.

But it was only for a moment that he lost his self-control ; in the next he had mastered himself.

His mouth twisted itself into a false smile, and putting out his hand as he advanced to meet Bruno—a hand which he could not prevent from trembling with alarm—he said in a friendly way—

"Well, Eversberg, you are the very last person I should have expected to see. Welcome to Dilburg !"

But Bruno did not take the offered hand. With a contemptuous gesture Bruno thrust the hand from him so that it came down with a hard blow on the desk.

"Cease your hypocrisy. De Graaff.—I come from Sollingen, and I know of all

your low, cowardly actions. What I have to say to you can be disposed of in a few minutes. I know not whether you thought that you could act, as you have acted, with impunity because the victim of your villainy was a defenceless woman. In that case you have woefully deceived yourself. Nothing should hinder me from whipping you as a dog in your own office if I had any pleasure in so doing, for a duel is out of the question. Such a miserable wretch as yourself is not worth the lead of a bullet, and however valueless my own life is, I will not lose it by the hand of a scoundrel."

With fiery, angry looks Bruno had said these words, advancing closer and closer to William de Graaff, who stared at him without speaking, pale as death, and leaning with his hand on the desk where he stood. When Bruno after his last words was also silent, he drew a deep breath.

But at the first word of the answer which William was about to make, Bruno interrupted him.

"Silence; I will hear nothing of your false, hypocritical story. What I have to say to you is this—To-morrow I leave Holland, never to return; but before I go I shall pay a visit to the Postmaster-General at the Hague, and shall inform him of what happened at the post-office at Dilburg. Calling Mr. Hiddema as my witness in this matter, I shall demand the dismissal of an *employé* who has made use of the trust reposed in him for his own purposes, to forward his personal designs."

At these words a mortal terror exhibited itself in William's face. The possible consequences of his conduct had never occurred to him, and there was something in Bruno's voice and manner that instantly convinced him of the fearful certainty that Bruno would make good his words.

If there was anything in the world to which he was attached now that he had lost Emmy (notwithstanding all his schemes and cunning) it was his official employ-

ment, which he carried on with zeal and satisfaction, and which besides provided him with the main part of his income.

"You would not deliberately make me miserable, Eversberg?" he stammered out with trembling lips.

"As deliberately as you made Emmy and myself miserable, as deliberately and with as much premeditation—and I will do it, and as sure as I stand here; but not simply out of personal revenge, William de Graaff, but in the interest of all whose letters pass through your hands, I will make you harmless at least in this respect."

Without waiting further for any answer from De Graaff, Bruno turned round and left the post-office.

An hour later he had left his native place, with the fixed resolve never to return.

And the threat uttered by him to William de Graaff was carried into effect. His accusation was followed by an inquiry, which was brought to a speedy termination by William's confession.

A few weeks later the *Haarlem Journal* surprised the Dilburgers with the intelligence that the post-master was dismissed from his office, while in the observations which followed they looked in vain for the word *honorable*.

As neither William himself nor any of the persons to whom the matter related ever gave any explanation of the circumstances, his dismissal remained an impenetrable mystery, which for a long time was the inexhaustible theme of Dilburg conversation; a theme which admitted of innumerable variations, but which in all its unexplained mystery was, if not lost in the course of time, at least forgotten, and all the sooner since Mrs. Welters, crushed under the disgrace of her son, left Dilburg with William and Mina after Elizabeth's marriage to take up their abode elsewhere.

What town is enriched by this amiable trio I cannot state with certainty, but it

any of my readers feel any interest about it I am ready to undertake the trouble of the inquiry.

Three months have elapsed since the events we have just described.

The summer, and even the autumn, have taken their leave to give place to the stern winter, which already before Christmas has spread its snowy mantle over the earth.

A great fire is burning on the hearth at Sollingen in the principal sitting-room. The sun-blinds have been replaced by double windows, to keep out the cold, and the heavy damask curtains and *portières* have shut out every draught.

The raw winter outside, the snow-drift heaped up by the fierce north wind, make the room appear still more comfortable by the strong contrast.

Emmy is walking up and down the room, her steps rendered inaudible by the thick carpet; but her countenance speaks of an extraordinary restlessness and disquietude.

Sometimes in her walk she stands still by the sofa, where, with cushions and blankets, a bed is made for little Seyna, who, with a pale sickly face on the pillow, is lying down asleep.

From time to time the young step-mother listens to the breathing of the child; and when she hears now and then, but with longer and longer intervals, the strange dry cough, an anxious expression spreads itself over her face.

The doctor has assured her that the danger is over, but the dry cough revives the recollection of the night in which the angel of death wrestled with the child—a wrestling so terrible and anxious that the recollection of it is ineffaceably engraved on her mind.

Whilst she was again listening to the breathing, the child opened her eyes and smiled at her affectionately.

"Mamma, will papa really come to-day?"

"Yes, dear child; but you must not talk too much."

"Does papa long for us as much as we long for him?"

"I believe so, Seyna; . . . I hope so."

How much pain is sometimes caused by a child's tongue!

How painful was this question to Emmy, who was so little able to answer it.

Siword had remained away three months.

Short, unimportant letters had in the mean time come from him to Sollingen, but not such as to call for detailed answers from Emmy.

Had his absence given her pleasure or pain?

She hardly knew herself how to answer this question.

At first, when the shock of his sudden departure was over, Siword's absence had been an indescribable relief to her.

The taking leave of Bruno had indeed left such an impression on her as to exclude all interest in anything or any one; however, weeks passed on and it was otherwise.

A dissatisfied feeling now came over her whenever she thought of her husband.

She became more and more alive to the full sense of his goodness and nobleness, and the thought that he had gone all alone to a foreign land whilst the place which right and duty assigned to her was at his side, disturbed her excessively.

The duty of rewarding him by grateful loving conduct for what he had done for her with regard to Bruno, of making his home as happy as he certainly had expected it would be when he married, became more and more clear to her.

Thus her thoughts began gradually to divide themselves between Siword and Bruno.

Just as she had followed in thought Bruno on his return to America, she now

followed Siword to Scotland, and after the first month had passed she began to look out with interest for letters, in which she hoped to find the time of his return home fixed.

But the days flew by, and the days became weeks, and the weeks months, and in the few letters which reached Emmy from Siword there was little said about himself, and not a word said about coming home. The cold tone of the letters, which neither touched on the past or future, made her constrained in her answers, of which Seyna was the principal subject.

She sometimes thought she could understand from Siword's whole behavior that he would not return until she asked him to come back, but this she dared not do, because she was afraid she should have to say something which she *could* not say. Bruno's image still lived ineffaceably in her heart. The recollection of him was a part of her life, from which she could certainly never disengage herself so long as the voice within her continued to speak so loudly of him.

Solitary and silent for Emmy were the months of Siword's absence, and the solitude began to oppress her more and more as winter approached, and the evenings became longer.

During the day Seyna was a great distraction to her.

The unexpected departure of the governess, who was called home by the death of her mother, brought the little girl wholly under Emmy's management, and provided her with a distraction and occupation which under present circumstances was in the highest degree welcome.

But in the evenings, when Seyna had gone to bed, she felt her solitude doubly; then her beautiful home seemed empty and deserted; hour after hour dragged on with a tediousness such as she had never recollect ed of any hour in her life, and at the same time there was a restlessness

about her which did not allow her to fix her thoughts on books. She neither made nor received visits, for she had excused herself to the neighbors until the return of her husband, who was absent on business.

And thus the days passed on without any remarkable event, until one day just before Christmas, when Emmy was awakened in the middle of the night by a strange, painful sound in Seyna's little room, which adjoined her own, and it appeared to her that the little girl was attacked by that most fearful of all children's complaints, the croup.

What Emmy suffered during that night of fearful wrestling between life and death, under the overpowering apprehension that the child might die whilst the father was absent—absent too through her fault, because she could not find courage to call him back—I can scarcely describe. Outwardly she remained calm, at all events calm enough to help the hastily-summoned doctor, and to assist him in his efforts to save the child; but on the first glimmer of daylight, when the immediate danger was over, she wrote a telegram with feverish haste to recall Siword, in the most urgent terms which an anxious heart could suggest.

From that moment she looked for Siword's return with an intense longing; the fear and anxiety of the night in which Seyna was in danger of death lay upon her heart as a terrifying, overwhelming thought, and it seemed to her as if she could not find rest until she should see the child in the arms of its father.

When after the second day the little girl was evidently recovering, Emmy poured forth from the bottom of her heart a fervent thanksgiving to God for His tender mercies in having spared her from the remorse which would have embittered the whole of the rest of her life, had Seyna died in Siword's absence.

"Does papa long for us as much as we

do for him?" the child had asked, and now that the time of his return approached, this question repeated itself to Emmy anxiously and doubtfully.

How should she receive Siword?

What should she say to him?

Would he meet her warmly and affectionately as before?

Would the cold shadow which had once come between them have diminished or increased?

Her anxiety had reached an indescribable pitch when she saw the carriage which she had sent to bring Siword from the station driving up the hill.

Trembling with emotion, forgetting all she had prepared to say to him on his arrival, and obeying the unchecked impulse of her feelings, she hastened to the vestibule to meet him, and threw herself sobbing on his breast.

And in this embrace of husband and wife a new morning of their married life dawned, and chased away the night of parting and alienation, and cheered both their hearts with the sunrise of hope.

Many words, at least in the first hours, were not exchanged between them.

Hand in hand they stood by Seyna's crib in joyful, heartfelt gratitude, speaking to the child words which as yet they could hardly have ventured to address to each other directly.

Neither of them recurred to the past during the whole morning and afternoon, but when evening came on, and Seyna had gone to sleep, and the flickering fire on the hearth was the only light in the room, Emmy interrupted an instant of silence in the history of Siword's journey by suddenly coming to stand by him; laying her hand on his shoulder, she said with a voice trembling with emotion—

"Siword, I have much to thank you for. I thank you for having gone away, and I thank you for having come back. I understand now that the separation has

been good for me, though sometimes I have found it hard to bear. Forgive me for all the sorrow I have caused you. I will do my best to make up to you for it."

Siword did not answer immediately.

Taking Emmy on his knee, he laid her head upon his shoulder, and pressed her to his heart with inexpressible tenderness.

"Child, let the past rest," he said, earnestly. "I have nothing to forgive you, and you nothing to thank me for. From this time forth we will be together. Thank God the day has come when I can say to you, Welcome! a thousand times welcome! to my heart and home."

CHAPTER XXIV.

CONCLUSION.

THE tale of weal and woe in a little world which I have been telling you is almost ended. There only remain two scenes for me to sketch ere we take leave of each other.

We must at once take a stride of two whole years to have our last look at Dilburg. This time I conduct you to the house of Mr. Van Stein—you will understand, of the late Mr. Van Stein. The great awning stretched over the door, the strange arrangement, as if in a shop, of the whole furniture, with numbered tickets on each article, tell one at a glance that a public auction is to be held here on the following day.

As we pass down the long passage and open the door of the small garden parlor, where we once were present at a sorrowful parting, we find an old acquaintance—Mary Van Stein.

She has just gone over the whole house, into every room. She has cast a last look at everything which in her memory seems at this moment to have constituted a portion of her youth, and she has contemplated all calmly, mournfully, but without suffering

or regret. The years which have elapsed have made little change in Mary. She never was pretty, and she is not so now; but in her whole being is expressed a goodness and peaceful harmony, which makes her exterior agreeable and attractive to every one who comes in contact with her.

Less pale than formerly, there is in her soft eyes a hopeful, cheerful expression. With her small white hands folded and resting upon her black dress, she sits sunk in thought in her father's great arm-chair, which also, by the ticket hanging to it, tells you of its destined sale. It may be that her thoughts are wandering back to the past; it may be that the front-door bell ringing in the passage in this evening hour suits her thoughts. At all events at that sound a sad smile comes to her lips.

And do not the approaching footsteps also serve to complete the delusion? Why does she rise so suddenly? Why does she gaze with anxious looks at the door, which is pushed open?

"Otto!"

"Mary!"

She gave him both her hands as a welcome, and he took them in his, whilst their agitation prevented either of them from speaking a word.

Mary was the first to recover herself. She placed a chair for Otto opposite hers, and, motioning him to sit down, said, in a friendly tone—

"I had scarcely ventured to hope that I should see you again before my departure, Otto."

Otto did not answer immediately.

His eyes wandered round the room at the strange disorder which prevailed there.

"Mary," he then exclaimed, suddenly, "is it true, then, what Emmy has written to me? Do you really and seriously intend to carry out that foolish plan?"

She looked him full in the face with a [redacted] moment.

"What foolish plan are you speaking of, Otto? What has Emmy written to you?"

"That you have a plan for going into the Deaconesses' House at Utrecht, and becoming a nursing sister."

"Yes, it is true, Otto," answered Mary, calmly. "May I ask what is the folly that you see in it?"

"Is it not a folly, Mary, when a person who has already passed her best years by a sick bed again voluntarily sacrifices the liberty which has at last been obtained? I call that folly, unpardonable folly!"

Mary smiled at Otto's vehement words.

"Look, Otto; you must not call any action foolish till you thoroughly know the reason of it. You say that I have passed my best years by a sick bed, and you speak of it in a tone as if I had been a victim. This is a distorted impression on your part. I admit that by that sick-bed I wrestled with hard, difficult hours; but in the fulfilment of this duty I have also found a source of peace, which has been and still is a support and comfort to me, long after those painful hours have been numbered with the past. I know, Otto, that you have seen my poor father more than once in his less agreeable moods! but you have forgotten what I have at all times tried to recollect—that they were caused by his bad health, and that his heart had no part in them. I admit, too, that, under the circumstances, nursing him was a task difficult to fulfil; but in the thanks which his dying lips expressed to me, I found an ample reward for all that I have suffered or sacrificed for his sake. These thanks, these loving words of recognition of my good intentions and good care, so richly rewarded me, Otto, that the sunshine which they shed upon my life gave me the first idea of my resolution. When my father was dead, I knew that I was alone in the world."

"It is true that the property which has come to me by his death might provide me

with a pleasant, easy life, with more abundance than my wants and desires demand, but such a life is not to my taste. As long as it pleases God to keep me in this world, I will not be a useless being.

"According to my notion, the woman who does not find her natural place in any household ought to ask herself, What can I do to be useful? What is within the reach of my talents? In what direction do they lead me?

"It is thus that I have taken counsel with myself. I have examined myself most strictly, and this is the result I have come to: the only position for which I am thoroughly fit is that of a good sick nurse.

"In nursing I have had practice and experience beyond many other women. I know how a pillow should be placed so as to ease a sick person. I know how to understand even a sign; I know how to humor his fancies. In a word, I venture to say that I have learned the science of the demands of a sick room to perfection, and the talent which God has thought fit to give me, by means of practical experience, I will so use that I can give an account of it when it shall please Him to call for it.

"Can you call that folly, Otto?"

"And when the day comes that you will repent of your resolution, when perhaps your health becomes unequal to the fulfilment of this almost superhuman task, what then, Mary?"

Mary again looked at him with a smile.

"Well, Otto, that is simple enough. A Protestant nursing sister is not bound an hour longer than she herself wishes. If my health should fail me, well, then I can ask for my discharge, and then it will be time enough to live the life of a useless old maid, which Heaven forbid should ever be my case!"

Otto had got up from his chair, and now he walked up and down the room, whilst his face betrayed an emotion which he was not able to control. After a short interval

of silence, he suddenly stood still before Mary, and his voice trembled as he said to her—

"Mary, it is nevertheless a folly when a woman who is so perfectly adapted to make a man and a family happy withdraws herself from the world. No, no! you must not do so. If you wish to do a work of love, forgive him whose heart in an evil hour wandered away from you, and who has paid so dearly for it, that his fault might almost be pardoned on that account.

"Mary, let me tell you what I have hoped from your goodness and forgiving disposition. Let me tell you what has been my dearest thought whilst I have been wandering in a strange land.

"Could you but know the alarm which took possession of me when Emmy's letter communicated to me your plans! Could you but know with what anxious haste I have travelled day and night that I might be in time. Mary, Heaven grant that it is not too late! Speak the word that can wash out all my misconduct towards you, and give me the opportunity of making up for it by the strength of the love and respect I feel for you."

When Otto began to speak, and Mary remarked by his emotion what he was going to say before he uttered it, she rose from her seat and became somewhat pale; but when he had finished she stood before him again quite calm, and without fear looked up at him with her soft sad eyes. Her voice sounded firm and serious, whilst she said to him—

"No, Otto: that cannot be!"

"Why not, Mary? Can you doubt my true repentance—my inmost love? Mary, believe me, it has been a hard lesson that your worth has taught me. Fear not that my heart should wander again, when it has found a safe resting place with you. Mary, be magnanimous and forgive me!" . . .

Advancing towards Otto, she laid her

hand on his arm. Her eyes were moist, but even now she did not in her answer lose her calmness.

"Otto, I entreat you, let this subject drop. I repeat to you it cannot be. I trust that you know me well enough to be aware that I am not disposed to petty-minded revenge. No, Otto, it is not that. It is not any doubt of the truth of the feeling which now inspires you, but the obstacle is in my own heart. It is that I no longer love you as a woman should love the man who is to be her husband. In this hour the most perfect truth should exist between us, and I will not, on account of any false shame, withhold from you my confession that I did once love you deeply. This love, which for a time was my supreme happiness, has been the cause of the deepest pain I ever experienced. The pain, by God's help, has been overcome, but my heart died in the struggle, and no power on earth will awaken it again from death."

The painful sensation which Mary's words excited in Otto were visible in his countenance.

Thoroughly beaten out of the field, he sat down again, and there was a shade of bitterness in his tone when he said—

"I have forfeited all right to complain; that I well know. You stand in your strength so high above my weakness, that I can only look up to you as a saint, and all further wishes and hopes on my part are presumptuous." . . .

But Mary would not let him proceed.

"No, dear Otto," she said, addressing him with a calm dignity, whilst she took his hand in hers, "you must not speak thus. You will repent sooner or later, if in this hour you are unjust. There exists no reproach against you in my heart, but neither should there be any reproach against me in yours. You know how willingly at one time I would have been your wife, but you know also that I was not to blame in what separated us."

"I never looked down upon you, not even when I discovered to my sorrow that you did not correspond to what I thought to find you. But I did pity you, and that pity still continues, because I know that the man who seeks his own happiness only, sacrifices his inward rest and peace without attaining his object.

"Otto, if you wish to make up to me for the past, give me the satisfaction of knowing that the last hour that we spend together in this world shall be an hour important to the life of your soul.

"Look, Otto! so long as we do not understand life as a duty to the fulfilment of which we should apply all our strength—a duty to which we should cheerfully sacrifice every desire in conflict with it—so long we shall find no peace or rest in ourselves; so long we shall walk in a maze.

"Do not hang down your head at the disappointment which I have been obliged to occasion; lift it up boldly and look before you."

"What can I do, Mary?" exclaimed Otto; "wander about the world as I have done the last few years; go back to Dilburg, to the old routine of the old business; take my place again in the old neighborhood which speaks of a past so little satisfactory to me?"

"As a man, there are a thousand ways open to you, Otto. Choose a wider sphere than Dilburg can give you. Establish yourself in a great town, and there begin a new life, and do whatever your hand finds to do that may be necessary or useful. You can do something for me also, Otto, if you will."

"You know there is nothing I would not do for you, Mary," answered Otto, in a half-reproachful tone.

"I must find some one, Otto, who will administer my fortune for me. Of one-third I have made a free gift to the Deaconesses' House of which I am to become a sister. As to the rest, I have to-day made

my will, that I may wholly close my account with this world before I dedicate myself to my new calling.

"A letter, asking you to undertake the service which I have just mentioned lies before you, and would have been sent to you to-morrow on my departure for Utrecht.

"I wish to apply the interest of that part of my property which I would place under your care to the general good.

"As a nursing sister, I am not permitted to make donations ; but it appears to me that no one is better able to find out the wants, whether evident or concealed, of a family than the nursing sister who helps them in trouble and sickness. I wish to provide for these wants with this money, and you, Otto, I should like to make my almoner.

"It is no small service that I ask of you. It will involve you in a hundred difficulties and tasks. Here you will have to provide fuel against the winter, here wine for the sick ; now a substitute for a conscript son, or an outfit for a daughter ; in some cases you will have to supply arrears of rent, in others to provide a lodging ; and all must appear to proceed from an invisible benefactor.

"Thus we may work together although we live apart. This has lately been my ideal ; for I had not forgotten you, Otto ; I take too much interest in your happiness —I have loved you too much for that.

"Let us both have the satisfaction of feeling that the love which once existed between us is not lost, but has spread out and developed into a true Christian love, which makes us useful, not only to ourselves, but to our fellow-creatures.

"Will you bind yourself with me, Otto, in a solemn determination to keep this vow, with God's help ?"

She stretched out her hand to him, and a sweet smile spread itself over her face, which was beaming with enthusiasm.

Otto took her hand.

He felt that Mary, in the sense in which he had hoped, was irrecoverably lost to him ; that he had recklessly played away a treasure which, but for his weakness, he might have called his own, and a cruel pain pierced his soul.

But in spite of this feeling, in spite of himself, he was carried away by Mary's inspired words. It seemed to him as if his eyes, which had been seeing blindly till now, were suddenly opened to a vast field ; as if the world acquired a new meaning, unknown to him before ; as if new powers were awakened in him, which had hitherto slumbered.

Kneeling down before her, and covering his eyes with Mary's hand, he said, in a voice faltering with emotion—

"Mary, you stand on a height which makes me giddy. Yes, yes ; I will be your disciple ; I will do my best to live with you in the spirit you describe. Dispose of me as you please in all things."

She bent over him and laid her hand on his head.

"May God be with you and strengthen you in your good resolutions," she said, solemnly. When Otto rose up again, Mary had left the room.

One last look at Solingen.

It is summer.

The warm sunshine is spread over the valley where, far and near, the harvest is in all its activity.

Everywhere, as far as the eye can reach, the husbandman wields his scythe in the waving corn ; in one field it is already mown, in another gathered into sheaves, and the homeward-bound wagons creak and groan under the heavy burdens.

From the hills of Solingen, which command a bird's-eye view of the whole country, the outstretched fields appear like a carpet chequered with green and yellow, the far distant men like puppets, and the

loaded wagons in like proportions, like children's toys; from Sollingen the scene is so beautiful and varied, one could never tire of beholding it.

And with every new and increasing interest the eyes of the fair young wife, who is sitting in the porch of the house, rest upon the scene.

On her lap lies a little boy, with dark curly hair and clear blue eyes, who has hardly completed his first year. He is gazing with astonished looks at a little girl of nine years old near them, who, armed with tobacco pipe and soapsuds, is amusing herself by blowing bubbles, which, carried off by the wind, rise up for a moment and glitter in the sunshine, and then burst into nothing. At every unusually fine bubble which glides from the pipe the little girl claps her hands, and says—

"Mamma! look! look!" and the little fellow stretches out his soft hands, crowing with delight, and stamping with his little feet on his mother's lap.

The young mother looks on with pleasure at the children's play, but her attention is involuntarily led away, and every moment she turns her eyes towards the footpath leading from the village.

At last her expectations appear to be fulfilled.

A merry smile spreads like sunshine over her lovely face, which, although wearing the stamp of health and contentment, yet, when at rest, has a serious expression bordering on melancholy, that speaks of sorrowful recollections and of past sufferings undergone by her.

"There is papa, Seyna!" she calls out; and the child on the lap of its mother stammers out "*pa-pa*," whilst the little girl lays down the pipe, and quickly and merrily runs down the hill to meet her father.

She places her hands in his confidingly as soon as she reaches him, and thus the father and daughter walk towards the

mother and son, who are coming down the hill to meet them.

"How long you have been away, Siword."

"Only a quarter of an hour over my time, little wife; come let me carry this heavy youngster up the hill!"

"Have you brought me news or letters from the village, Siword?"

"Both news and letters, Emmy; but you must control your curiosity till we are up the hill."

Emmy smiled; happy and contented, she watched husband and child, and when they reached the portico, the fun of blowing bubbles, which for the moment had been interrupted by the father's arrival, began again. The little Siword almost jumped out of the arms of the great Siword after the soap bubbles which Seyna, with untiring energy, blew up into the air. And the attention of all of them was thus quite withdrawn from Emmy, to whom her husband had just given a letter, the address of which was of itself sufficient to cause her the greatest emotion.

It was a letter from Bruno Eversberg, addressed to Siword Hiddema, but written to Emmy, and was as follows:—

"If any one two years ago had assured me that I should ever be in a state to address you in a happy tone, dear Emmy, I certainly could not have believed him.

"And yet so it is.

"Three days ago Jane Siddons became my wife, and I cannot resist the temptation to make you a sharer of my happiness—for happiness I may well call it—to be able to call my own a wife of such goodness and loveliness.

"I hardly know in what way it all came about.

"She was the confidante of all my sufferings. She knows all that has happened between us. She knows my whole life's history—the stain which rests upon my

name in all its extent—and she has not been deterred by it.

"How much I am indebted to her I can scarcely describe. Without her comfort and support I should have sunk under all the sufferings which weighed me down. Yes, without her careful nursing I should undoubtedly have died in the severe illness which, on my return to America, brought me to the brink of the grave in her father's house. And now she has crowned all her goodness by becoming my wife.

"That I shall never again set foot in Holland I can well assure you, and I am not less sure that I shall never forget her who filled, as she did from my earliest childhood, such an important place in my affection. Emmy, might I but once hear that you are happy with the husband whom, so far as I can judge from our slight acquaintance, I regard as thoroughly worthy of you? This would remove the last shade which is spread over my happiness.

"Recall me to the friendly remembrance of Mr. Hiddema. I shall never forget how noble he showed himself in his dealings towards you and myself.

"Believe me now and always
"Your friend, BRUNO EVERSBERG."

And below Bruno's writing there was in a woman's hand in English as follows :

"I asked my husband to translate his letter to me.

"My happiness was bought with great sorrow both for you and him, but I loved him ever since he entered my father's house for the first time, when he was little more than a boy and I a little girl.

"Be easy about his happiness; I will take care of it, and love him all the better if he loves me less than he did you."

With tears in her eyes, drawn from the mixed sensations, in which joy had the greater share, Emmy laid down the letter.

At that moment Siword brought back her son to her.

She took the child in her arms, and turning towards her husband, and looking up at him, she said, with a countenance which entirely expressed the peace and happiness of her soul—

"Siword, I know this now: God makes His creatures happy, but in His way, and not in theirs!"

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